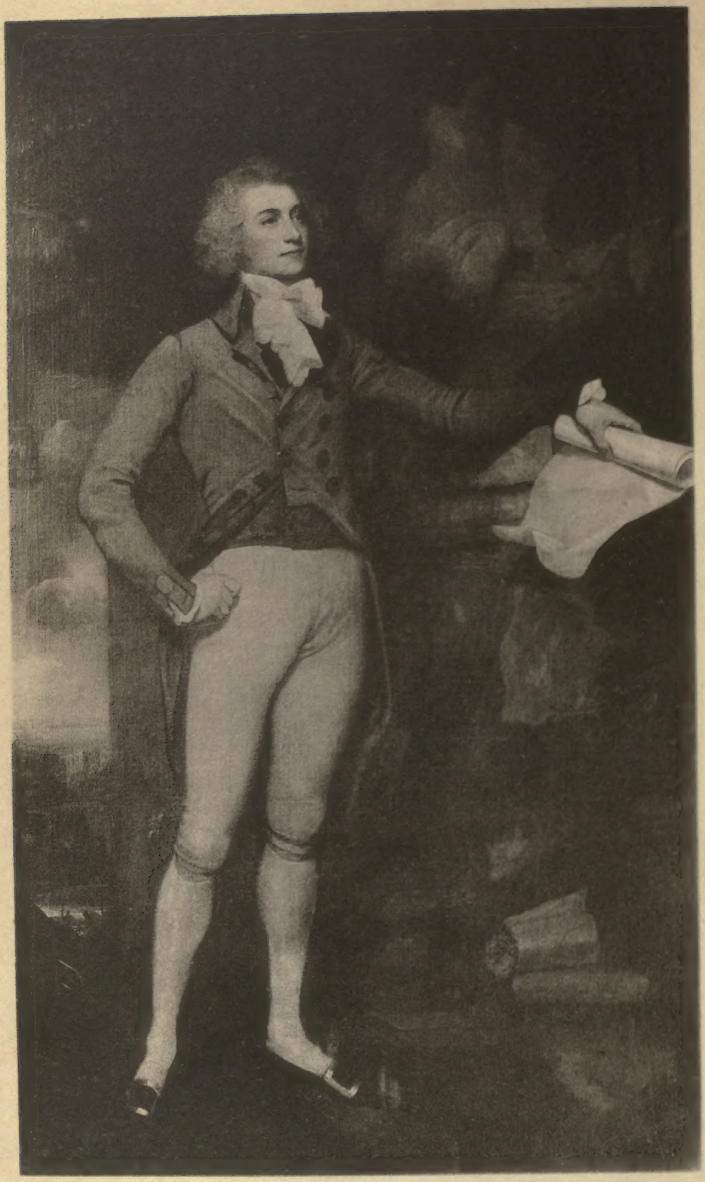


# SHERIDAN



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RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
at the Warren Hasting Trial,
from the original portrait by G. Romney
(in the possession of Lionel Phillips, Esquire).
(The back ground is probably Deepdene.)

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# SHERIDAN

FROM NEW AND ORIGINAL MATERIAL;
INCLUDING A MANUSCRIPT DIARY BY
GEORGIANA DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

BY

WALTER SICHEL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

"Parliamentary [illegible] make-
shift for [illegible] lief is
necessary to [illegible]

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1909



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"Whose mind was an essence compounded with art,
From the finest and best of all other men's powers,
Who ruled like a wizard the world of the heart
And could call up its sunshine, or draw down its showers."

T. MOORE *on Sheridan.*

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# BOOK II

# HIS POLITICAL CAREER AND AFTER

[1780—1816]

# SHERIDAN

## CHAPTER I

### DÉBUT

(November, 1780—February, 1783)

"C'est l'art de créer des faits, de dominer en se jouant des évènements et les hommes; l'intérêt est son but, l'intrigue son moyen: toujours sobre de verités, ses vastes et riches conceptions sont un prisme qui éblouit. Aussi profonde que l'Etna, elle brûle et gronde longtemps avant d'éclater au dehors. Mais alors rien ne lui résiste. Elle exige de hauts talents; le scrupule seul peut lui nuire."

BEAUMARCHAIS ON POLITICS in "*La Mère Coupable.*"

IF anyone were to ask for the immediate cause of the French Revolution, the simplest answer would be, the American War. Lafayette was baptised in its blood, though Lafayette little suspected to what orgies France would be led by its creed. But the American War and the stimulus which it gave to political thought, were only symptoms of a vast upheaval that long exercised England. During the decade preceding that war the rights of man and the potent fictions of social contract already found vehement expression. Wilkes, the opportunist, had gambled with them gaily. Reform, annual parliaments, were brought forward, Indian government was "regulated," Ireland was considered as human, twice were the Catholics relieved. In this very year of 1780 Burke sent his winnowing fan to purge the stables of corruption. The royal prerogative was denounced. Revolution, agitation, were in the air, and the father of agitation was the young Charles James

Fox; so much so that he was publicly rebuked for being a rebel, and publicly denounced as Peisistratus, the King of Westminster, by one who called him out, but afterwards warmly espoused his cause.[1] His ideas were crude and abstract, nor could he calculate their issues. But Fox's mentor in the league against Lord North was a far finer spirit. If Fox was the father of agitation, Burke was the member for the Constitution which also came to be interwoven with Fox's theories.

Freedom is a term far more elastic than authority. The abstract Constitution was Burke's holy of holies, the perfect unity of the Constitution his dogma. But in fact the Constitution was not a definite, still less an unalterable system, nor a set of fixed rules, though Bolingbroke had formulated its doctrines. What it really meant, apart from its "checks" and "balances," was the supremacy of Parliament, while that predominance, or as some thought it, usurpation, stood for the reign and permanence of Law. The English Revolution ended one form of arbitrary power, though of a fresh kind it held the germs. Wealth lay behind Parliament. The Revolution had effected a fresh limitation of monarchy. To-day democracy limits the throne; oligarchy limited it for the Georgians. The Whig oligarchs, the "great" Revolution families, purposed to perpetuate their dynasty, and against these, obstinate kings and a stagnant people struggled in vain. Their influence, yearly centred and cumulative, crept down, as it were, like a glacier into the green valleys of generous impulse; so freezing and stealthy proved its march downwards. Burke, while he rested on Revolution logic, long abetted these monopolists, who eventually crushed him.[2]

[1] Adam. For the Peisistratus-comparison cf. Adolphus, Vol. III., p. 230. How much Fox was the father of agitation is shown by a letter of his as late as 1801 to Lord Holland, who had vainly tried to tempt him back to opposition by taking a house for him in town: ". . . It must be from movements out of doors and not in Parliament that opposition can ever gain any strength."

[2] Horace Walpole wrote when Rockingham died that he told Fox: "My Whiggism is founded on the Constitution and not on two or three great



CHARLES JAMES FOX

orating,

from a caricature by Bunbury.

The deifier of Parliament[1] and crusader against Jacobins, never discerned that the rigid precedents which he invoked were themselves, like the Reformation, a halfway house to free thought and public opinion; that the English Revolution had been the act of a few; that the ultimate contest, only postponed by a death-struggle for national existence, was bound to be one between youth and age, licence and bureaucracy, enthusiasm and statecraft; between order without liberty and liberty without order. And long before that crisis, even in 1780, the hardened veterans were already faced by a phalanx of impetuous rebels.

Enough has been said of Sheridan's attitude to forecast his political start. Fox—the Fox who had once scathed Wilkes—now exclaimed, "How long shall the sacred shield of majesty be interposed for the protection of a weak administration?" Sheridan was heart and soul for the fulminating Fox—in a word, he was a "new Whig," a modern Radical. Every fetter of political discipline was repugnant. The American War, with its foregone conclusion of the right to revolt, boded the new dawn of a freer day. If the English Revolution had seemed a pillar of precedent, if it continued tradition on a sound basis, none the less it proved a drastic precedent for change. It claimed to bind posterity: posterity would not be bound. The Whig aristocrats had long posed as exclusive philanthropists, but government for the people, through the people,

families; my Whiggism is not confined to the Peak of Derbyshire [*i.e.*, Chatsworth]." For Burke's awe of the families cf. his "Some Thoughts on the Present Discontents." Burke had never exalted the people, cf. (*e.g.*) his letter to Fox (about opposition) of October 8, 1777 (Russell's "Life of Fox," Vol. I., p. 152): "As to that popular humour which is the medium we float in, if I can discern anything at all of its present state, it is far worse than I have ever known or could ever imagine it. The faults of the people are not popular vices. . . . The greatest number have a sort of heavy, lumpish acquiescence in government, without much respect or esteem for those who compose it."

[1] Burke always insisted that Parliament should control America. The repeal of the Stamp Act in 1765, reserving Parliament's right to tax and legislate, is supposed to have been Burke's recommendation.

and by the people, at once became Sheridan's watchword; and even before his election he was appointed sub-chairman of the Westminster Association for Reform. This league, together with that for "Constitutional Information," now pressed a cause which linked Fox and Sheridan to the youthful and scornful Pitt. Two years later Sheridan warmly upheld Pitt's first motion for a purged representation; Burke alone stood aloof. On February 2, 1780, Fox and Sheridan, countenanced by the Dukes of Richmond and Portland, presided over a mass meeting in Westminster Hall to press the cause of universal suffrage and even of annual parliaments. Sheridan used afterwards to say that in such matters moderation was a mistake. "Once a year," said some, "and oftener if need be." He belonged to the "oftener-if-need-be's."

Sheridan warmly admired Chatham,[1] who had embodied a nation and erased the local lines of party. But with Chatham's last disjointed ministry, which failing health had freed from his control, government had gone to pieces and parties had lost their savour. All the recent ministries had been kinds of coalition, patchworks or mosaics at best.[2] Indeed, there were no great parties, only splinters of them in the shape of gangs and groups for or against the King, attached to this or that political patron, and usually attached by turns. If Chatham had never got the gout, there would probably have been no American War, or at least its worst evils would have been averted. But Chatham's gout gave all the atoms a chance, and they shot hither and thither, gravitating at will, either towards the Court or the paying families. Unless a political aspirant were a King's man, he must be a Grenvillite or a Rockinghamite, a Grafton's man or

[1] Cf. his remarks in a speech of April 10, 1790, on the tobacco excise duties (Speeches, Vol. I., p. 544).

[2] Horace Walpole wrote to Lady Ossory at the beginning of 1775: "Do I care for hearing how many ways Mr. Burke can make a mosaic pavement of an inlaid cabinet?" Towards the end of Lord North's incoherent ministry, it was proposed that he should join with Shelburne; cf. Hist. Man. Comm., Abergavenny MS., p. 51 (Dundas to Robinson, March 3, 1782).

a Richmond's man, a dependant of the Rutlands or of the Bedfords, a nominee of the Bentincks or the Cavendishes.

Two of Chatham's early lieutenants had emerged, the one, Lord North, the King's friend, a man of no convictions but invincible good humour; the other, Lord Shelburne, Chatham's titular successor, like Chatham originally a soldier, but by no means the giant's counterpart: a man of subtle mind but small imagination: unsympathetic, burrowing, enigmatical, ambidextrous: a man of puzzling words, double meanings and crooked safeguards:[1] lacking in tact, unable to strike the public or the moment, incapable of confidence or of winning it; after he had been thwarted as minister,[2] by turns a "King's friend," a supposed fomenter of the Gordon riots, and, ten years onwards, a declared semi-Jacobin. When Sheridan tried to express his abhorrence of one of Warren Hastings's agents, the worst word that he could write on the margin of his paper was "Shelburne."[3] Allied by marriage to Fox's best friend, Fitzpatrick, Shelburne now headed an opposition which Fox really led. He has been often maligned. His twist was more of intellect than of character, yet in strength and enlightenment of mind he surpassed most of his generation. His information, and his scientific schemes for obtaining it, were prodigious. His grasp of situation was only equalled by his knowledge of details; and the mystery of his failures is perhaps explained by his lack of that mental sympathy which is to the faculties

[1] Cf. (among countless literary allusions) J. Townshend in the "Rolliad" (on "Jekyll"):

> "A noble Duke affirms I like his plan:—
> I never did, my Lords—I never can;—
> Shame on the slanderous breath which dares instil
> That I, who now condemn, advised the ill.
> Plain words, thank Heav'n, are always understood:
> I could approve, I said—but not I would."

In the notes to the "Epistle of Joseph Surface to R. B. Sheridan" (1780) are many curious facts about Shelburne.

[2] Under George Grenville in 1763.

[3] Sheridan MSS.

much as charity is to the virtues. This aloofness not only estranged his colleagues and perplexed his sovereign: it also prevented his ever founding a party (though young Pitt now served under his banner), or enlisting any real support from the political magnates (though Lord Temple now stood behind him and Grafton was his friend).[1] None would long back the dark horse, who never proved a winner; nor when he was finally excluded, would any stable receive him; so that after 1783 both he and North (but for a strange *rapprochement* during 1789) were left out, grazing in the cold. So much for these almost opposite Chathamites.

The hope of the old Whigs, on the other hand, was Rockingham, and he was also the hope of the new. Gentle, blameless, rich, and receptive, he offered a clean slate for Burke to write on. Comprehensive enough to have coalesced with Grafton, who afterwards clung both to North and Shelburne, disinterested enough to have opposed a grant to the King's brothers, his width could harbour the left wing of the party, while his independence of the Crown completed the Whig ideal. But, in essence, Rockingham was a cipher. Only his amiable correctness kept the Whig household together—a household which, when Rockingham came in, to die two years later, comprised Shelburne, its family lawyer; Fox, its spendthrift heir; Sheridan, its boon companion, and Burke, its dominie general and universal preceptor—Burke, the high-

[1] "Lord Shelburne, ambitious and impatient as he was [in March, 1782] to attain that eminence [the First Lordship of the Treasury], stood on too narrow a bottom to venture to close with his wishes. Followers of property he had none, or those so inconsiderable that they gave him no weight. The Duke of Grafton was the only peer of consequence with whom he was connected, yet a man who had been Prime Minister was not likely to prove a zealous second. . . . Lord Camden's eloquence, character and integrity made him by far the most considerable of Lord Shelburne's friends. Mr. Dunning was an able lawyer, and Colonel Barré as able a tool, but all these could not form an Administration or be called a party." Horace Walpole's Memoirs of George III.; cited, too, in Fox's Corr., Vol. I., p. 308. Temple, too, was a Shelburneite, although now attached to Rockingham and protesting that he would never desert Rockingham's friends, cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 248.

minded and brilliant veteran, but also (in public) the brilliant bore, whose letters were essays and whose very epitaphs occupied a page: Burke, the length and delivery of whose magnificent speeches, marred by a rasping voice and strong accent, often dazed and sometimes cleared the House. "He thought of convincing, while they thought of dining," sang Goldsmith. "My parliamentary fervour," wrote Lord Sheffield in 1783, "cannot hold out more than ten days longer. Thank God, Burke is quiet."[1] Shelburne was soon to be at daggers-drawn with Fox, and seven years later Fox and Sheridan with Burke. No wonder that in 1788, when the Whigs prayed that the Prince of Wales might be Regent, Sheridan's desire was for a repetition of the old and accommodating Rockingham administration.[2]

A fourth vignette remains, that of the King. George the Third was now forty-two years of age, and he had reigned twenty-two years without popularity. Aiming from the first at being a patriot king, he had been singularly unfortunate in his means. Chatham would have made him so, in his second administration came near to so making him, but George preferred the loyal but pedantic Bute, with his secret system of double Cabinets. Not till 1784 did the young Pitt manage to bring the monarch and the multitude together, despite the buffer of the "great revolution families," and even thence-forward the course of the French war, with its attendant burdens and reverses, prevented him from being what he was afterwards considered, the father of his people. It was Nelson in 1798 who first really popularised the King.

But it must not be assumed that George was a pig-headed bungler, nor must we forget with what obstacles he had to contend. Historians frequently fail to put themselves in his

[1] Journal of Lord Auckland, Vol. I., p. 53. The length of Burke's performances, however, was nothing to that of "the dinner bell" David Hartley. Jenkinson said that he remembered the member for Hull rising to speak at five in the afternoon in the summer of 1779. Jenkinson rode into the country and, returning at nine o'clock, found that Hartley was still up and speaking. Cf. Wraxall, Vol. III., p. 125.

[2] Cf. App. 3, Duchess of Devonshire's Diary.

place, and regard him in the light of issues which at the time wore a different aspect. He wished to rule, not to reign. He was not a genius or a prophet, but he was a king every inch, with limited ideals which he strove faithfully to fulfil. His courage was conspicuous. He disliked show and pretence. He set an example of simplicity to his subjects,[1] and he relied on the household virtues. Affable to the crowd, he was yet a stickler for pedigree.[2] In his eyes nobody was a gentleman who could not show three generations, and he flatly refused to appoint any but such "gentlemen" to bishoprics. Even his antipathy to Fox was tempered by his admission that he was a "gentleman," and to this extent "not disagreeable in the transaction of business." Prejudiced himself, he had to stem the prejudice against his forbears, in his case aggravated by "the miseries of the American War."[3] Proud of being the first to be truly English—and his heir used to boast the same—he inherited some of those characteristics which had not recommended the House of Hanover. Colley Cibber had thus satirised George's father, the "poor Fred," who "was alive and is dead":—

"Heaven spread through all the family
That broad, illustrious glare
That shines so flat in every eye
And makes them all to stare.

Heaven send the Prince of royal race
A little coach and horse,
A little meaning in his face
And money in his purse.

And as I have a son like you,
May he Parnassus rule,
So shall the Crown and Laurel too
Descend from fool to fool."

[1] Addington tells us in one of his letters that a mutton chop was the fare which he partook with the King.

[2] One of his favourites was Sir John Irwine, the gentleman who gave his Majesty the retort already cited about "the bottle." In 1781, when feasting the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (Sackville), he decorated the table with a confectioner's model of Gibraltar. His second wife wrote a treatise on "The Wines of the Ancients."

[3] How unpopular he was on this and other accounts will be found in a

Like his predecessors, too, George had to contend with a mutinous son; like Queen Anne also, he was periodically confronted with his coffin in the shape of his successor's claim to be Regent.

He had further to contend with his own superstitions. He believed in divine right fully as much as the Stuarts had believed in it. For him, America rebelled against God when she defied the Lord's anointed; so did France, and he was ready to fight and make England fight for monarchy. He was an anti-Romanist fully as fierce as Cromwell had been, and this caused his rejection of Pitt when the Irish union was to pave the way for Catholic emancipation. His main fault was ignorance, but he was ignorant even that he was ignorant.

Above all, he had to wrestle with the Whig oligarchs, to whose dictation he was in thrall; and Pitt, whom he admired but feared, enjoyed his confidence just because he stood unfettered by these connections. Treachery lay all around him. He let Shelburne outwit the Duke of Portland only to see North outwit Shelburne. He saw North, whom he trusted, shake hands with Fox, whom he loathed both politically and as the perverter of his son. He saw Thurlow manœuvring ministries and Loughborough undermining parties. He saw Dundas at the bottom of most things. And, after Bute retired from intrigue to travel abroad, he leaned on his twin reeds, John Robinson, the attorney's clerk, and Charles Jenkinson, appraiser of placemen by appointment.[1] He stood on his guard against lawyers and politicians. And so he came to play with them and on them, flattering their vanity and humouring their greed.[2]

rhymed satire of 1783, "The Beauties of Administration," which is written in the manner of Churchill.

[1] Robinson had been originally articled to Wordsworth's grandfather, who was a solicitor. He was rewarded by the Surveyor-generalship of Woods and Forests and died in 1802. Charles Jenkinson was created first Earl of Liverpool in 1796 (and Baron Hawkesbury earlier). He lived till 1808. Bute, after going abroad, still continued to solicit seats for his sons. Cf. Hist. Man. Comm., Abergavenny MS., p. 39. "*Lank meanness* sent her darling Jenkinson," says "The Beauties of Administration" (1783).

[2] For an excellent instance, cf. Jenkinson's letter to Robinson of September 24, 1783, three months before the Coalition, so distasteful to the

In such management he was as shrewd and astute an expert as his wife proved herself to be with the money-bags. His energy was immense. The more circumstance cramped it, the more his latent excitability found vent, and these upsets brought on those recurrent fits of madness which troubled the land. But even his lunacies could not silence his mother-wit. When Dr. Willis, the parson-doctor who quelled patients by "the power of his eye," attended him at Kew, the Duchess of Devonshire relates how inquisitive the King was to ascertain why his keeper was both clergyman and physician. Willis profanely answered, "Our Saviour was both, sir." "Yes," retorted the King, "but He did not have six hundred a year from the Church."[1] Again, when Pitt returned to favour after an interval which began with another of the King's aberrations, he expressed his delight that George was now looking so well. The King replied that the cause was obvious; when they last met he was losing an old friend, while now he had regained him.

The August dissolution which saw Sheridan's return worsted and baffled the Northites. North himself found both his health and his forces failing. He wanted to make peace with America: the monarch thwarted him. Dutch and Indian affairs threatened: with the best intentions he was powerless. But for the King's insistence, he would gladly have resigned earlier in the year, and now the Gordon riots had dealt a fresh blow to his ill-cemented ranks and tottering Government. While Lord George was scraping psalms on his fiddle in the Tower, the violence of his incendiaries had terrorised the public. At one moment

King, had ended: ". . . He complies with their advice in all publick matters, but they generally find him out of humour. He grants them whatever he can take from them again, but nothing permanent. I was always sure that he would refuse Ellis' peerage, and I am now curious to see what he will say to the Duke of Portland's request," etc. Cf. Hist. Man. Comm., Abergavenny MS., p. 60.

[1] Cf. App. The Duchess of Devonshire's Diary, Devonshire House MSS.

North's majority sank to ten, later on it sank to less. He was worried to death. Dundas, his right hand, grumbled; Sandwich, his mismanager of the navy, rebelled; while all his adherents, anticipating his downfall, clamoured in crowds to pick the bones of the carcase. But the end of his long reign was not yet. When it came, the jumble of political grouping showed itself in three successive ministries within eighteen months. For the moment the Foxites raised their hopes, and redoubled their energies. But they were over-hasty. Had North resigned in 1780, Shelburne would certainly have stepped into his shoes.[1]

Fox, through General Fitzpatrick, had brought Sheridan into the Whig sanctuary, Brooks's, and the House expected much from his fame, but he did not start by airing his brilliance: he bided his time.[2] His maiden speech on November 20, 1780, was a bald protest against a petition to unseat him for bribery, though Woodfall, the reporter, records that "he was heard with particular attention," and that "the House was uncommonly still while he was speaking." The speech, however, contained one significant passage of arms, for Sheridan was constant in maintaining the majesty of the People. He now declared that the petition traduced and insulted the "respectable majority" of his electors, and when Rigby sneered at such popular pretensions,

[1] Cf. Abergavenny MS., *passim*.

[2] For the general expectation cf. Wraxall, Vol. II., p. 51. Fitzpatrick proposed Sheridan for the club on October 12, exactly a month after his return for Stafford, and Sheridan was elected a member on November 2. The old *canard*, retailed by Wraxall and others, that Sheridan's membership of Brooks's was effected by the ruse of sending Lord Bessborough off to Cavendish Square on the pretence that his house was on fire, and George Selwyn to Cleveland Row by a false message that his "daughter" was ill, is unsupported by any evidence or likelihood, and may have been started by some rumours about Tickell's election five years later. Lord Bessborough was Sheridan's good friend and would be most unlikely to blackball him, nor is there a tittle of proof that Selwyn—an arch-blackballer—was hostile to Sheridan. Fox's influence in any case at this time would have been quite enough security for Sheridan's election. This story of the blackballing is repeated in "The Royal Register" (a gossiping characterisation of politicians), which appeared in 1784.

Fox pulverised him, and the Speaker reminded the House that there was no question before it. To the rights of constituents Sheridan again referred, in a wider connection, fifteen months later. This petition business, instituted by Whitworth, the Tory member for Stafford, worried Sheridan for nearly two years.[1] Only once did he speak again during this session—on the vote of thanks to Earl Cornwallis. In the following February he spoke casually on a motion affecting the Civil List. He reserved his real force for a longer effort—a motion for the better regulation of the Westminster police, the real gist of which was a severe stricture on the alleged necessity for employing troops against the ravages of the Gordon rioters. This speech, and not the earliest, must surely have been the one of which the story is told that when Woodfall remarked that Parliament was "not his line," Sheridan, leaning his forehead on his hand, replied, "It is *in* me, and, by God, it shall come out."[2] But even in this effort no fireworks appeared, and no phrasing except "the busy, bustling spirit of liberty." He argued seriously that a proper police would have obviated the recourse to arms, and that only in the case of sedition should the military be employed. The trials showed that only Lord George had been indicted for treason; he was in truth at once "the leader and the army," and all his subordinates were accused of felony alone. Sheridan's resolutions were negatived. But

[1] Cf. Mrs. Sheridan's Harrow letter in App. (1).

[2] Moore, in his "Life" (Vol. I., p. 348), applies Woodfall's comment to the first speech. In his "Journal," however, where the story is told *in extenso* (Vol. I., p. 251), he gives a Mr. Joy as its recounter. Joy he describes elsewhere (*ibid.*, p. 179) as a good fellow but rather a coxcomb, and "as eternal a quoter as Dr. Pangloss." This Joy was an acquaintance of William Linley's and belonged to the set of Bowles, Byron's aversion. He is responsible for the story of Sheridan telling Tom after his marriage (with an heiress!) that he would cut him off with a shilling, and Tom's reply of "You don't happen to have the shilling about you now, sir, do you?" But, on the whole, Joy is not a very trustworthy source. The Sheridan tradition sometimes transfers the son's wit to the father, and to Tom probably applies the anecdote related of Sheridan himself and his own father: "You had better settle down and take a wife."—"Whose wife shall I take, sir?"

amongst further deliverances during this and the beginning of the next year, were three, characteristic of his prolonged interest in the navy, a minute as to the state of which in 1777 survives among his papers.[1] That interest was perhaps quickened by the fact that his brother-in-law, Samuel Linley, had just died in the service. "If peace was made," ran the spirited peroration of Sheridan's third pronouncement, "If peace was made, while the House of Bourbon was equal in marine force to this country, there would be an end not only to the commerce and prosperity, but also to the civil liberties of the kingdom." Two other speeches of this period evinced and emphasised his independent spirit, for both ran counter to Fox, his political godfather, who in one instance roundly vented his annoyance. In the first he inveighed against gambling, and Fox was an arch-gamester. In the second, prompted probably by his wife's experience, he opposed his friend's clause to reduce the ages under the Marriage Act. "If girls were allowed to marry at sixteen," said Sheridan, "they would be abridged of that happy freedom of intercourse which modern custom had introduced between the youth of both sexes, . . . and boys in a moment of passion . . . might be prevailed upon to make an imprudent" or indecent "match." Fox answered that Sheridan's ingenuity could give any turn to any argument: for himself, he should defend "liberty."[2]

[1] The memorandum touches on the mutinous spirit already displayed and the lack of organisation: "Although we have had five years' peace, not one squadron has yet been sent to sea to exercise the crews of the guardships." The Speeches are: (1) May 17, 1781, on the second reading of the Bill for preventing desertions. (2) February 7, 1782, on the naval affairs of 1781, in which he calls Sandwich "a man born for the destruction of the British navy." (3) February 20, on Fox's motion about naval mismanagement. He was "heard throughout with great attention." Cf. Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 15, 19, 20. In 1797 Sheridan referred with pride to his exertions for seamen in 1786: "Sir," he said in a telling passage, "I have ever been their friend." Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 196.

[2] June 20, 1781. The other instance was on May 15, on the Bill for preventing "Abuses and Profanations on the Sabbath Day," rather a strange occasion to rank Sheridan among the prophets. Cf. Speeches, pp. 15, 16. Next year he reverted to this subject on the report from the Committee of the "EO" Bill, *ibid.*, p. 27.

In Sheridan's first speeches and his early notes for them may be discerned the attitude of an imperialist democrat, or patriotic Radical; and in this attitude, sometimes advocating the Radicalism and sometimes the patriotism, he never wavered. During 1780 to 1783 he is to be found almost passionately demanding a deference to the will of the nation, now requiring it in elections, and now as applied to foreign affairs. This double attitude is manifest from jottings of this date among his manuscripts. On the Radical side of his views, a whole bundle exists concerning his sub-chairmanship of the Westminster Association: he presses triennial parliaments and even universal suffrage. There are notes on the Long Parliament Statutes, and on a statute of the first year of James the First, where the quaint expression "We agnize on the knees of our hearts" preludes the statement that "we are *all* represented by our free election." On the patriot side, a scrap exists of preparation for a speech on France and the American War. "It is impossible," he exclaims regarding the former, "to separate contempt from resentment and ridicule from indignation."[1] And these two aspects are equally patent in his published speeches. The Government, he said, complained of reform associations, of petitions to end the American War; but unless they had been both feeble and cynical, no such manifestations would have been needed. And he used this opportunity to retaliate on Rigby, the placeman, in a passage which long afterwards bore fruit in "The Critic." Rigby's double front, he urged, arose from his double functions as Paymaster and Privy Councillor. The Privy Councillor had never been able to persuade the Paymaster, and "unfortunately, in whatever character he spoke, it was the Paymaster who always voted in that House." Clearly the Councillor softened, but the Paymaster was fixed, and Sheridan repaid Rigby more than tit for tat.[2] During Shelburne's brief spell of power, again, the patriot

[1] Sheridan MSS.

[2] Speech on Lord John Cavendish's motion of censure on ministers, March 8, 1782 (Speeches, Vol. I., p. 21). This speech also contained, so

in Sheridan burst out in discussing the projected terms between England and Holland. The negotiations, he urged, left France free but England bound, and despite young Pitt's angry protests, he called for the particulars of the unconcluded treaty. Immediately afterwards, in considering the preliminaries for the general peace, he not only justified his interposition by precedent, but poured fresh contempt on the proposed surrender of British "interests and glory." This was the speech in which Sheridan uttered the famed retort which Pitt, the youth who, in Romney's words, "turned up his nose at the world," never forgot. After complimenting Sheridan's "abilities," "the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns and epigrammatic points," the Chancellor of the Exchequer regretted that they were not reserved for their "proper stage," and sneered at the speaker's connection with the theatre. Whereupon Sheridan, deprecating personalities and the questionable taste which had introduced them, rose off-hand to turn the tables against his censor: "Let me assure the right honourable gentleman that I do now, and will at any time when he chooses to repeat this sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good humour. Nay, I will say more. Flattered and encouraged by the right honourable gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if ever I again engage in the composition he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption, to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters, the character of the 'Angry Boy' in 'The Alchymist.'"[1] Four days afterwards, Shelburne quitted office,

Burgoyne recorded, a sally against Dundas, the Lord Advocate, whom Sheridan termed the Demosthenes of the House.

[1] Cf. Speeches, Vol. I., p. 30, February 17, 1783. In an "Advertisement extraordinary" addressed to Tickell, and still among the Sheridan Manuscripts, he afterwards elaborated his jest into a whole play-bill. The King is cast for the part of "Surly" (by which name Mrs. Tickell calls him long afterwards), and Shelburne for that of "Subtle." Cf. also Rae, Vol. I., p. 399. The speech, as reported, scarcely bears out the cause of Pitt's annoyance, for it contains only one trope—about "the rumoured coalition which had been compared to a honeymoon, but ought rather to be styled a wedding."

and Pitt only remained to carry on business till his successor should be appointed. The retort of "the Angry Boy" was to be remembered in the "Rolliad";[1] nor did Sheridan ever forget Pitt's taunt. Seventeen years later he was even with him once more, when he told the story of Paterson, the Manchester tradesman, who painted "Pitt and Paterson" on his cart. Questioned as to his reason for thus enlarging his firm, "Ah," he replied, "Pitt has indeed no share in the business, but a very large share in the profits of it."

But this is a peep into the future. On March 20, 1782, the Opposition onslaughts were shrewdly forestalled by Lord North's resignation. "The noble lord in the blue riband" laughed himself out of office,[2] and the King, hard pressed, but anxious to be popular,[3] reluctantly sent for Lord Rockingham. George the Third did not yield without a struggle. He twice summoned Lord Shelburne, but Lord Shelburne owned that he could not stand without Lord Rockingham, whereas Lord Rockingham could well stand without him. He tried Lord Gower, the then head of the Bedford connection, but he and that connection were too weak. And when at length the Whig was inevitable, he actually refused to see him until he kissed hands, and trans-

[1] "Give me a horse, Cathcart should ne'er annoy,
Nor thou, O Pitt, behold the Angry Boy."

[2] It is only fair to recall North's defence of his administration when, in June, 1784, he answered the retrospective attacks of Sir Richard Hill: "I found the American War when I became minister: I did not create it. On the contrary, it was the war of the country, of Parliament, and approved by the people. But if the gentlemen opposite think otherwise, let them come forward and accuse me: I shall not shrink. . . . Nay. I demand it as a matter of justice. I am wholly unprotected. The minister of the day [Pitt] has a House of Commons to accuse me, a House of Peers to try me. . . . Almost all . . . my confidential friends [pointing at Dundas] are now become *his* friends. . . . I court the inquiry, but if when thus called on, they do not grant it. I must insist that they do not henceforward argue upon the charge as if it were proved." It was said that the Rockinghamites bargained for North's neutrality by promising not to impeach him.

[3] Cf. Fox to Fitzpatrick (then Irish Secretary), April 12, 1782, "The King appears more and more good-humoured every day," etc. Fox's Corr., Vol. I., p. 315.

acted all the preliminaries through Shelburne, who was appointed one of the Secretaries of State and a Knight of the Garter. Charles Fox, the other State Secretary, had stormed and cursed, but he did not move for North's impeachment, as he and Burke had vehemently threatened; office, like charity, covers a multitude of sins,[1] and Fox's real ambition was to cripple the Crown. The crucial point during the next few months was the negotiation of a peace, and the race for it lay between the two jealous Secretaries of State. Shelburne took good care that Fox should not win.[2]

In this mild administration Sheridan, as Fox's henchman, received his reward. He was appointed an Under-Secretary of State, and though (as became his habit) he sighed for the sweets of "the good Opposition," the choice of office was his own. "I take it for granted," he wrote to his brother, who scented emolument, "that you know from the newspapers that it is the *Under-Secretary of State* who has become thus punctual. Whether you may think I have chosen prudently or not, I can't tell, but it is the situation of all others that I have thought the rightest for me to take. I wanted to force myself into business, punctuality and information; and when I resolved to be in this way, I resolved also to sacrifice every other object. The want of attention or knowledge of business shall not positively be an objection to me in anything I aim at hereafter—as you shall see and hear—and so also will you hear of Mr. Secretary

[1] On November 27, 1781, Burke "trusted a day of reckoning would come, and whenever that day came, he should be able by impeachment to bring upon the *heads* of the authors of these unhappy affairs the punishment of them. The Nation as an animal was dead, but the vermin which fed on it had still an existence." On these points (*inter multa alia*) cf "Two Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, by J. S." [Scott, later Eldon] (1783).

[2] The metaphor of a race between Fox and Shelburne is employed in "The Heroic Race," a rhymed satire which follows "The Beauties of Administration" (1783). After the race is lost, it says of Fox :—

> "Lost is his soul in scenes of blissful love,
> He half forgets that Sh——e is above;
> One oath he swore, to indignation fired,
> Frowned, turned his heel—and with his Burke retired."

Fox."[1] As a man of business in the brief Rockingham ministry, Sheridan persevered. Like Fox, he was now as industrious as he had been idle.[2] He spoke seldom. He devoted himself, as Lord Sheffield bore witness, to routine,[3] and he took a keen interest in the two problems that now pressed for solution: the peace with America and the Continent, and some sort of Home Rule for Ireland, where the volunteer movement, caused mainly by England's neglect to defend her, had infused and concentrated a national spirit. Protestants and Catholics were united; Grattan was their inspirer, and Grattan's parliament was the result. To these main issues must be added two subsidiaries—Burke's fresh measure for reforming offices, which Fox and Sheridan regarded as a means of clipping prerogative, and William Pitt's first of three motions for that reform of constituencies which had been dear to his father's heart. This proposal they heartily supported; but Burke condemned, though he would not vote against, it.[4]

While the friends of freedom regarded American Independence as the dawn of a new era,[5] the old guard saw nothing but humiliation for England. Peace had to be made both with

[1] Sheridan to his brother, April 2, 1782 [six days before Parliament met], Sheridan MSS., and cf. Rae, Vol. I., p. 382. This letter answered one from Charles Sheridan in Dublin of March 27, which alluded to Sheridan's regret at being in power, and, as has been noted, while rallying Sheridan on his will-for-the-deed habits, actually deferred the repayment of a debt and begged for a place, found for him in the shape of no less a post than Irish Secretary at War.

[2] H. Walpole's words of Fox to Sir H. Mann, May 5, 1782.

[3] Cf. the passage from Lord Auckland's Journal quoted in the "Overture" to this work (Vol. I., p. 78), as to Sheridan's early attention to parliamentary business.

[4] It was a scarecrow to the King. For some sound criticisms on Pitt's measures, cf. "Lucubrations during a Short Recess," by a country member, "London, 1782." For Fox's inconsistencies, cf. "Political Blossoms of the Right Honourable Charles James Fox, London, 1788." Chatham had made an ineffectual effort for reform in 1770.

[5] Nowhere is the situation better shown than in two "Letters" of 1782 and 1783 from Thomas Paine in Philadelphia to Lord Shelburne on his speech of July 10 in the former year. These were published in pamphlet form by Ridgway in 1791.

France, Holland and America. The difficulty was, how to accommodate surrender to patriotism. Instant negotiations were in train. The original French terms had been of the haughtiest. European diplomatists looked on Britain, shorn of thirteen colonies and imperilled by France in India, as demoralised, well-nigh undone. Trincomali had been taken, and it was known that the one strong Governor who could save the Carnatic, by means however Eastern, was himself in imminent danger of being dethroned by his judges at home. France dictated to England as to a fallen foe, and hoped to nullify Chatham's great Treaty of Paris. Had it not been for Rodney's victory in this spring over De Grasse—a conquest which electrified Europe after his partisan recall by the Whigs[1]—the Treaty of Versailles would have been even worse than it proved. Even so, the ministry was divided. Shelburne had declared that the "sun of Great Britain would set" whenever Great Britain acknowledged American independence; and now, voicing the King, he wished to delay, perhaps to avert, its formal recognition and to use it as a mere lever for wringing some trivial concessions from the French. Fox, whose group, through Ireland, was in the ascendant,[2] pressed for an instant and separate declaration lest France should gain any fresh credit with the New World by the definitive treaty. The schism of outlook was further accentuated by a schism between the British envoys in Paris, now closeted with Vergennes, but swayed and prompted by Franklin. Shelburne had sent Oswald, a Scotsman; Fox's emissary was none other than Sheridan's old friend, Thomas Grenville. Cabals ensued, and Fox, who years later himself suffered his friend, Adair, to visit St. Petersburg

[1] Keppel was the Whig admiral. Fox and Burke inveighed against Rodney's depredations in St. Eustatia.

[2] The Duke of Portland was sent to replace Lord Carlisle as Lord Lieutenant in April. Fitzpatrick (whose sister was Fox's sister-in-law) had been appointed Irish Secretary. Burgoyne was made Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland. Sheridan's brother blossomed into the Secretary for War. Outside Ireland, Fox's uncle, the Duke of Richmond, by turns rabid and accommodating, a theorist and a *gourmet*, was Master-General of the Ordnance.

while Pitt negotiated with Russia, never forgave Shelburne for what he chose to term his underhand dealing.[1] At no time in his brilliant yet ineffectual career could he bear to be thwarted, and he was always an *enfant terrible* in the political nursery.

It is certainly more interesting to see where Sheridan diverged from Fox than where he merely repeated him, and the few surviving letters of his present correspondence with Grenville afford an opportunity. Sheridan's fervour for America, as already evinced in his "General Fast," outdid even that of Fox. Like Fox, he was for excluding any clause for American independence from the French treaty; he would have none of the Shelburne leaven. But, like Shelburne, he still hoped that such a course might perhaps advantage Britain as against France.

"Surely," he wrote on May 26, "whatever the preliminaries of a treaty with France may be, it would be our interest, if we could, to drop even mentioning the Americans in them; at least the seeming to grant them as at the requisition of France. France now denies our ceding independence to America to be anything given to them, and declines to allow for it. In my opinion it would be wiser in them to insist ostentatiously (*and even to make a point of allowing something for it*) on the independence of America being as the first article of their treating. But since they do not do this, surely it would not be bad policy, even if we gave up more to France in other respects, to prevent her appearing in the treaty as in any respect the champion of America, or as having made any claims for her. . . . Were I the minister, I would give France an island or two to choose if it would expose her selfishness, sooner than let her gain the *esteem of the Americans* by claiming anything essential for them in apparent preference to her own interest and ambition. All people of all descriptions in America will read the treaty of peace, whenever it comes . . . , and if they

[1] Something, too, it was said, in the East Indies, had been offered to France by Shelburne without the Cabinet's knowledge, and on this account the Duke of Richmond and Walpole's friend Conway were now disposed to break with the slippery minister, cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 10.

should see there that she has claimed and got a good deal for herself, but has not appeared to have thought of them, however they may have profited in fact, it would certainly give us a great advantage in those sort of arguments and competitions which will arise after a peace; whereas if it appears as a stipulated demand on the part of France that America should be independent, it will for ever be a most handy record and argument for the French party in that country to work with. And this, as things stand now, and as far as my poor judgment goes, appears not to be a very difficult thing to have either way And so these are my politics on that subject for you."[1] Thus, Sheridan, the sentimental yet foreseeing. Lord Shelburne's views prevailed, however, and America gave Europe the French Revolution in exchange.

In Irish affairs he approximated to Fox. Yet, considering that his brother was Grattan's ally and in close touch with Sheridan, while he is often referred to in Fitzpatrick's letters, Sheridan may have influenced, nor did he always share, his leader's opinion.[2] Ireland was exasperated both at North's inaction in leaving her naked to France, and by his action in putting no fewer than five English Bills on her statute-book. Grattan demanded the repeal of the law named after Poynings in the reign of Henry the Seventh, which bound the country by English statutes. Fox, ready to repeal it, desired to do so in his own time and way. He deferred to the Duke of Portland, the newly appointed Lord Lieutenant, who feared to precipitate a crisis and, before he set out for the Castle in the place of Lord Carlisle,

[1] Sheridan to T. Grenville, May 26, 1782; cf. Rae (who adds two other letters), Vol. I., p. 388. Mr. Fitzgerald quotes this one from the "Buckingham Papers" in his "Lives of the Sheridans," Vol. I., p. 272.

[2] In the following year Fox thus wrote (November 1) to Lord Northington: "Peace is the natural period to the Volunteers, and if they are encouraged to subsist for any considerable time after this period, all is gone, and our connection with Ireland is worse than none at all. . . . Volunteers, and soon possibly Volunteers without property, will be the only government in Ireland unless they are faced this year in a manful manner. . . ." Cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 165.

had summoned that nobleman home to advise him. With Carlisle returned his secretary, William Eden (afterwards Lord Auckland), who had held high offices under Lord North, and was closely associated with Ireland. Officious, as always, and now offended, as Sheridan tells us, by the use made of his chief, he threw a bombshell into the ministerial ranks by himself moving the repeal of Poynings's Act without warning or consultation.[1] More than this, he expatiated on the past history of Ireland, revealed the Government's plan, and declared that if his motion were evaded the worst mischiefs would follow. This was a bad start for the ministry, but Sheridan found a way out; he voted under protest, upholding the principle but condemning the motion. Eden, wrote Sheridan, had acted "like a man of no understanding," and disliking to be thought an idiot, eventually withdrew the motion.[2] The course was clear for Rockingham, and one enduring act of his heroic legislators was Grattan's parliament, but even that was fated to disappear before twenty years had expired. Had Rockingham's rule been prolonged, it is quite possible that responsibility would have sobered Fox; but suddenly, on July the first, Rockingham died of the influenza.[3] Shelburne, that necessary evil, was now a certainty, and with Shelburne Fox was furious, as furious as he had once been with North. Shelburne had played him false over the French treaty, and he would have neither part nor lot in any Shelburne administration. But though "the Jesuit" was a certainty through Chatham inheritance, Fox chose to fancy otherwise. Both Burke and the younger Whigs, extreme, impecunious, and able,

[1] April 8, 1782. The cause of Eden's annoyance appears from an autograph letter of this time from Sheridan to his brother which in 1908 was in the possession of Mr. Daniell, of Mortimer Street.

[2] Cf. the letter above cited, and Sheridan's speech (Speeches, Vol. I., p. 25). For Fox's attitude and the Duke of Portland, cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. I., *passim*. Fox was by no means a favourer of the Irish Volunteers.

[3] In "The Tears of Yorkshire for the Loss of the Most Noble the Marquis of Rockingham," Doncaster, 1782, which is worth reading if only for its unconscious humour, the titles of the deceased occupy a whole page, and there are stories of his virtuous childhood which rival the style of Barlow in "Sandford and Merton."

set their hearts on the Duke of Portland, a chief rich and blameless as Rockingham, and Fox always averred that Shelburne now jockeyed them all again by secretly posting to Windsor. At this juncture Shelburne was not the sole minister acceptable to the King. The young Pitt, sedate though a reformer, and quite unfettered by antecedents, had shot up into prominence and was slowly laying the foundations of power. Shelburne thought wonders of Chatham's son, and if Fox was a marvel, what was "this new Octavius," ten years his junior? Fox was a statesman of impulse, and impulse was very inconvenient to George. Pitt, on the other hand, was already a statesman of purpose, and at the age of twenty-three Pitt found himself Shelburne's Chancellor of the Exchequer. Thus doubly crossed, Fox flatly refused to remain as Shelburne's colleague. Years before, he had dissuaded the anti-Northites from seceding; years afterwards, at another hopeless moment, he was to secede. And he seceded now. Burke, Sheridan, Lord John Cavendish (a noble nonentity), and others, followed his retreating footsteps, and loud indeed was his wrath against his uncle, Richmond, for lingering in precincts where the new-fledged angels scorned to tread. There was nothing now for all of them but the old, uphill path, the path so familiar to Sheridan. "And so," he wrote to Grenville, "begins a new Opposition, but wofully thinned and disconcerted, I fear."[1] Charles and Dick, captain and lieutenant, became more friendly than ever, and friendlier because they were freer. The whole blame for their *fiasco* was laid on the shoulders of the Machiavelli in Berkeley Square. To Sheridan at this juncture Fox wrote in a letter preserved among Sheridan's papers, "I cannot help hoping that there is something like a chance of hanging Lord S. at last. O! if *The Englishman* were alive now, how well might he explain to the world what natural consequences all these are of the neglect of ministers."[2] Their whole energies now concentred on Shelburne's overthrow. His short

[1] Cf. Rae, Vol. I., p. 303.

[2] The letter turns on West Indian affairs. This is the one, too, in which Fox defers to Mr. Sheridan's opinion as to the origin of the white and red rose. It is signed "Yours ever."

reign proved but an interregnum. He could satisfy very few of his hungry on-hangers; North was agog to edge in; the Bentincks, the Cavendishes, awaited occasion. The canny Dundas, it is true, had already made his account with the newcomer, but then Dundas was quite ready to make his account with any successor who might stay. Lord Temple (afterwards Marquis of Buckingham) had made his account also, and replaced Portland in Ireland, for what could stop the Grenvilles in their barnacle-adhesion to any rock? At the prospect of Shelburne's fall the greedy were at rest, and peace brooded over all the whited sepulchres in the cemetery of corruption. Some compromise, however, might still be effected. That old court-guide, Jenkinson, already manœuvred to couple North and Shelburne, while the shifty Eden and supple Lord Loughborough thought of a junction between North and Fox. Dundas himself shrewdly inclined to one between Fox and Pitt. And so with peace provisions as yet at issue, the Opposition wrought cheerily on all these elements of discord. But things soon quickened towards a close. The preliminaries of the Versailles Treaty were signed on January 2, 1783; on the 27th copies of the conjoined provisional treaty with the United States were laid upon the table. On February 21 a vote of censure on the peace was carried by seventeen—and seventeen were enough. Shelburne, eclipsed by the rising Pitt, who eventually ignored him, flickered out in his socket. An interval of chaos ensued. For nearly six weeks England was without a Government. All the under-strappers were at work. The King himself implored Pitt to form an administration. He refused, well knowing that the King and the nation were not yet united; willing, too, to give Fox, from whom he had finally parted, more rope to hang himself. The King then urged North to the rescue. North replied, "The Duke of Portland is ready to come in," and the King's comment was, "Then I wish you good-night." Next followed what can only be compared to a scrimmage in an auction-room. Shelburne, hoping to remain, bid for Pitt; North even meditated a bid for Shelburne; Fox, plied to bid for Pitt, could not bring himself to the sacrifice, though half

a year later he was to long for Pitt's reinforcement.[1] The sum cancelled itself out; there was nothing for it but oil and vinegar, Fox and North. Fox, it is true, had vowed that never while he breathed would he shake hands with such a scoundrel as North, but Shelburne's enormities effaced that feud, and, as Fox protested in Latin, his enmities were placable but his friendships eternal. And thus in an age of coalitions aggregated from segments—an age which had seen Pitt's father joined to the fatuous Duke of Newcastle—the unmixable got together, and Charles Fox, under Portland's nominal ægis, shared his power with North. The King was in despair. Portland was not to his taste; Fox was his abhorrence. He sighed, he sobbed, he swore; he even threatened a retirement to Hanover.[2] All along, he had sought for a "comprehensive" ministry, but this was a thing which, like the Peace of Utrecht and the peace of God, "passed all understanding." The dividers of the spoil, however, were a match for George, who could only insist that his Lord Stormont should be President of the Council. On April 2 a new administration was named. His dear Thurlow was swept away; the Great Seal was put into commission. North became Secretary for the Home Department; Fox, again, for the Foreign. Burke was Paymaster of the Forces; and Sheridan, with Burke's son, Secretary to the Treasury.[3] Townshend took the Ordnance, and the mediocre Lord John Cavendish, Selwyn's "learned canary-bird," who had even aspired to the Premiership, became Chancellor of the Exchequer.[4] The Earl of Northington ruled Ireland, and

[1] Cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 208. "Fox to Lord Ossory, September 9, 1783." "If Pitt could be persuaded (but I despair of it), what an amazing advantage it would be to the country," etc.

[2] So he assured Thurlow in August, 1783; cf. Wraxall, Vol. III., p. 123.

[3] According to Moore's informant, O'Beirne, Bishop of Meath ("Journal," Vol. II., p. 297), Sheridan had even hoped for the Chancellorship of Exchequer, and had shut himself up for three days to master figures. "This accounts for his taking the *financial line* afterwards in his opposition to Pitt." But O'Beirne is not very trustworthy, as on the same page he says "positively" that Elliot wrote the "Prince's letters" in 1789, which we shall see was only partially the case.

[4] Lord J. Cavendish was a younger son of the third Duke of Devonshire;

Windham, the delicate casuist, opened his career as Secretary at the Castle.

But from the first the Coalition was unpopular. It was the last resort of shufflers. After all, Shelburne had made the peace and had been unfairly ousted. The exclusion of Thurlow estranged the King as much as the unnatural alliance which incensed the nation. Both the country, it was said, and the closet were dead against it.[1] Its virtue was not its own. It held the seeds of its own dissolution, which by the force of circumstance must one day bring together the King and people. At present, it stood suspiciously between them. Some there were who hoped that its unwelcome variety might lend breath to the administration, but Pitt smiled a bitter smile and the King—"sulky-Nobbs," as Mrs. Sheridan called him—turned his back when Fox kissed hands, looking for all the world like the shying horse at Astley's just before it kicked off its rider.[2] The Grenvilles (especially Lord Temple) and the ex-Chancellor Thurlow,[3] vowed vengeance for their exclusion, while the former, who always held that the nation must starve because they were greedy, retired in dudgeon. And so, in a shower of patronage rained alike on Radicals and reactionaries, the Coalition rushed in, and Lord Shelburne, still scheming to be quits with it, hobbled out for ever.[4]

Mason had been his Cambridge tutor. Horace Walpole wrote of him, "Under an appearance of virgin modesty he had a confidence in himself that nothing could equal, and a thirst of dominion still more extraordinary." His "fair little person" and priggish manner are responsible for Selwyn's *sobriquet*.

[1] Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 30.

[2] "Turned back eyes and ears," says Lord Sheffield in Lord Auckland's "Diary."

[3]
"See Thurlow stand, he sheds a secret awe
And is, or seems, as gloomy as the Law,
Like a huge bull, that, jealous of his reign,
Gores and expels each rival from the plain,
Then seeks the distant shade, or marshy pool,
His chief delight to bellow and to rule."
"Beauties of Administration" (1783).

[4] In early June, Lord Temple (afterwards Marquis of Buckingham) had

Hill, afterwards the psalm-singing "Sir Richard" of "The Rolliad," compared the North-Fox alliance to that between Herod and Pontius Pilate. When Rockingham came in, he had been welcomed as an antidote to widespread corruption. But this Coalition was the freak of clandestine intrigue and the makeshift of cunning place-hunters; it typified no cause and no necessity; it was a union of talents and not of principles. From the nation's point of view it was a fraud, from the monarch's a monster. George never rested till he had undone it, by means unwarrantable as those which contrived its formation. But, curiously enough, those unwarrantable means proved the sole opportunity of reconciling the People to the Throne.

to make room for Lord Northington as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. His designs to overturn the ministry can be seen from his correspondence at this period with his brother, W. Grenville, in the Fortescue Papers (Dropmore), Hist. MS. Comm., *passim*. Shelburne's desire to edge in is apparent from the Abergavenny Papers, Hist. MS. Comm., p. 69, where, in the December of the *next* year, Jenkinson writes to Robinson that Shelburne will "not be satisfied till he is once more got into office."

## CHAPTER II

### THE COALITION

(March—December, 1783)

'How happy could I be with either
Were t'other dear charmer away."

THERE is an amusing skit written after the Coalition's downfall and worthy of the pens that indited "The Rolliad." It is entitled "The Coalitional Rencontre Anticipated," and exhibits an excellent frontispiece by the caricaturist Bunbury. Fox as "Carlo Khan"[1] meets the fair "Northelia" by assignation in St. James's Park. "But why," exclaims the amorous swain:—

"But why so soon abroad, my dear,
At this dull season of the year?
Why meet this early chilling breeze,
Why stroll among these leafless trees?"

North was nicknamed Boreas from the north wind, and the "early chilling breeze" did not agree with the warmth of Fox. Legions had to be satisfied by a minister who for ten years of power had disappointed expectants, and in the Coalition Cabinet Fox soon found that the wind of promotion usually blew from the north.[2] Wilberforce said that the Coalition inherited the vices of both its parents: the violence of the one, the corruption of the other; and Sheridan had grave doubts of this *rencontre*. He knew that the Coalition would stink in the

[1] Fox was first so called from a caricature after the failure of his India Bill, which represented him entering the City on an elephant in Eastern magnificence.

[2] Among many promotions Dartmouth was made Lord Steward, Hertford Lord Chamberlain, Townshend head of the Ordnance, and Lord North's complaisance to the Scottish onhangers once favoured by Bute, is mocked at in "The Beauties of Administration" (1783). Fox's friends, including the two Burkes, Sheridan and the uncouth Lord Surrey, were, of course, provided for, but his share of the spoil was comparatively small.

nostrils of the country gentlemen and the middle classes; he knew Fox's impatience for power; he knew that his friend's headstrong temper would tempt him to pettish violence in return; he doubted the bond and he misliked the security. Lord John Townshend, whose father raved against the Coalition, used long afterwards to protest (and the statement has been propagated) that Sheridan was a "vapouring rogue" for "impudently" affirming his original mistrust of Fox's wisdom in the league with North, and indeed so Lord John wrote in two letters to Lord Holland as late as 1830, adding that Sheridan was over-eager to get into office. But not only was Sheridan not eager on such precarious terms, and indeed congenitally inclined to opposition, but some ten months after the Coalition happened, and not ten weeks after it fell, he publicly and in a full House declared without contradiction that he advised Fox against it at the time; while Moore in his "Journal" records a story that he had paced up and down for hours endeavouring to dissuade his friend from so rash a decision. "Mutual diffidence," he observed in his speech, "between men long accustomed to oppose one another might be expected. The prejudices of the public also concurred to prevent this Coalition. The middling class of people whom he highly respected, and to whom, sooner than to the great, the House of Commons must look for support in every emergency, were not certainly the best qualified to judge of nice and refined points of politics: accustomed to judge of measures by men, he apprehended that they would give themselves no time to examine the principles, motives, and grounds of a Coalition, but would condemn it on its first appearance, merely because it was composed of men who had long been political enemies. On these grounds, full of apprehension for the character of his right honourable friend, he most certainly had given him his advice against a coalition."[1] This declaration is direct, and it should be noticed that Sheridan's observations were to reassure the doubtful Foxites, and not

[1] Cf. Speeches, Vol. I., p. 68 (Speech of February 3, 1784, on the Censure of Ministers), and cf. McCormick's "Memoirs" of Burke, p. 260.

to protest his own prescience; indeed, it would have been for his interest to have made out that from the first he had agreed on this matter with Fox. In one of his later speeches he again referred, and emphatically, to the House's knowledge of his averseness to the Coalition,[1] though in the earlier speech just cited he professed his joy at an event which he had originally deprecated. And, in addition, Warren Hastings's over-zealous advocate, Major Scott, whose lucubrations Macaulay has unfairly belittled, distinctly stated in a pamphlet of 1788—one too refuting a pamphlet by Sheridan—that the latter was "said" to have "advised his friend Mr. Fox very strenuously not to assent to an union with Lord North," and that "experience had proved that the advice was sound and wholesome." Not a whisper to the contrary is audible in any record from 1783 to 1788, and Lord John's prejudiced after-tattle must therefore be received with reserve and almost with suspicion.[2] "Damme, sir, they breed," once said the Duke of Cumberland about journals, and the rumours of Holland House have proved quite as prolific. Sheridan has enough of the equivocal on his shoulders without adding spurious imputations to the weight.

[1] In the MS. notes for one of his speeches on the Additional Forces Bill in 1802-4, he thus expresses himself, "If I am told I have been an enemy to Coalition,—Yes! But why not to revolt public opinion?"

[2] Major Scott's pamphlet is "Observations on Mr. Sheridan's Pamphlet entitled 'A Comparative Statement of the Two Bills for the Better Government of the British Possessions in India,' in a letter from Major Scott to Sir Richard Hill, M.P. for Salop. London. John Stockdale. 1788." For Sheridan's own statement cf. Speeches, Vol. I., p. 69 ("Censure on Ministers," February 3, 1784). Lord John Townshend's letters are to be found in Fox's Corr., Vol. II., pp. 21—28. In the second of these letters he makes a slip so manifest that it should be mentioned. He says Sheridan was the "loudest in his lamentations" over the Coalition "more than a twelvemonth afterwards," a statement disproved by Sheridan's speech of the date above cited. The story of Sheridan's walk with Fox is given by Moore in his "Journal," Vol. IV., p. 78. Its source was Lord John Russell, who, when he edited the "Journal," inserted a note that the story "does not appear to be true." His reason was doubtless the rumours above summarised, for he was dieted on the Holland House traditions. For Lord J. Townshend's father's antipathy to the Coalition, cf. Lord Auckland's "Journal," Vol. I., p. 54.

Behind the Coalition lurked another league, which in the long run must have vitiated and, as a fact, nearly ruined the North and Fox administration. This was the secret pact of the extreme Whigs with the young Prince of Wales, on whom, in this June, an income was settled, confessedly inadequate compared with the revenues of his predecessors, the increased wealth of the country, and the fact that the King himself had not yet settled the debts of his own father. From this moment dates the Prince's active support of the "Fox-hounds," who, on their side of the bargain, tacitly agreed that his finances should be bettered. It was more than a silent understanding; "no bad opportunity," wrote Lord Sheffield to Eden, "for ministers to oblige friends." Eighty thousand pounds for the Prince's income could be extracted, one hundred thousand were claimed. A concession of the difference would rivet His Royal Highness to the cause of Fox.[1] For the nonce the Prince was a popular card to play in the political game, and till 1793, when he severed himself from the extremists, the Prince's debts were periodically played off by Fox against the Crown, and eventually against Pitt. Sheridan, who about this time had met the Prince at Devonshire House and struck up a fatal friendship that outlasted Fox's, advocated his cause, and clung to him through every vicissitude. It was an ill-starred alliance, that involved political principles in family feuds, and mixed up the party of progress with the extravagance of a royal rake. When Burke once discussed the shabbiness of a monarch who stinted his sons, he solemnly pronounced that three things alone were requisite for the state of the heir-apparent—a fine dining-hall, an imposing chapel, and a magnificent library. What were these to the royal spendthrift, and what had Burke to do in that *galère?*

The Prince of Wales had just attained his majority, but he had been a man of pleasure in his teens. Mary Robinson, the once schoolmistress of Chelsea, was now fast ceasing to bewitch him, and was about to sink into the sad "Perdita"

[1] Cf. Lord Auckland's "Journal," Vol. I., p. 53. The King wished to dislodge the Coalition on the Prince's affair, but Thurlow dissuaded him; cf. *ibid.*

of romance. She was replaced by the high-born Grace Dalrymple Elliott, whose record of the French Terror, which she witnessed and in which she suffered, remains the most graphic of any extant. He sighed for many, and he seldom sighed in vain. For in truth none made a braver show of generous impulse. The nation swallowed the son's errors the more easily because as yet they could not stomach his father. Little that he did (and he did most things but duty) was taken amiss, and with all his errors even Burke believed that his heart was in the right place.[1] After all, he was young, and Prince Hal had been the same. Handsome, athletic, graceful, unreserved, he fascinated the *élite* and conciliated the mob. At every *belle-assemblée* he aired his accomplishments. He was musical and literary; he sang well, rode and shot well, danced well, talked well. He might be seen bowing, as only he could bow (it was said he was born bowing), in St. James's, or holding his own stoutly with bullies and prize-fighters in St. Giles's. If he "drank like a leviathan," it was only to outdo the smaller fry. The gardens of Carlton House resounded with Italian music, as the admired of all beholders bandied wit and compliment with Mrs. Crewe or Georgiana of Devon. At Devonshire House, the centre of its constellation, he shone in full lustre, a tinsel star in a pasteboard firmament. But his abilities were marked also. He was not merely accomplished, still less was he the fiddling fool of Thackeray's portrayal. Frivolous as he was, vulgar as he became, he was never stupid. Though he reacted against the over-rigour of his early training, he had studied, and even thought. His memory retained scholarship besides anecdote,[2] and he could hold his own with most. Years afterwards the hard-headed Erskine confessed that he had met his match in one who "picked the teeth out" of any argument; and the clergyman, summoned, but summoned in vain, from

[1] Burke did more: he urged Sir G. Elliot to cultivate the Prince's acquaintance. Elliot gives a very favourable account of him; cf. his "Life and Letters," Vol. I., pp. 327-8.

[2] He was versed in Homer, but his enemies used to assert that he had only one stock quotation from Virgil.



GEORGE, Prince of Wales,

from an engraving

after the portrait by Sir William Beechey.

Lord North's to marry him, has recorded that "he was one of the best arguers in his own cause" he had ever known. He judged men quickly and, as a rule, with justice, till suspicion weakened his discernment. And he could read and render their characteristics: Fox digging his thumbs into his eyes when perplexed, and the Duke of Portland's hesitating air. His tact was notable. At this Coalition period, when an extreme Whig opponent tripped on entering the Prince's box at Drury Lane, he raised him, saying—in words which his grandfather had once used to Bolingbroke—"I am always happy to give my support to an honest man."[1] But his more solid gifts were spoiled by an itch for notoriety. He posed to himself perhaps as much as to others, and he mistook posing for popularity. As was well written of him, "He was ever too important to himself, saying finer things than his feelings prompted."[2] He longed to be popular, and, had his wish to govern Ireland been gratified, or, later, his desire to see active service, he might have succeeded.[3] Sheridan certainly purposed to make him a leader of the people. But his want of character ruined all; he was hollow to the core. Of two things only was he incapable—of awkwardness, and, by his own admission, of speaking the truth. He did not lack courage. He could face death boldly, and "This is death, my boy," was his salute to eternity, though his last hours were troubled by remorse—at not having bestowed a baronetcy.[4] But he could never face anything that thwarted his whims, and truth must have often seemed awkward to the man who to the close wore next his bosom the miniature of his disowned Maria, and who, in his late craze for avarice, hoarded banknotes in the dainty portfolios that held the love-tokens of his prime.

[1] Sheridan MSS., Tickell Corr. The man who slipped was George Byng.

[2] Cf. "Memoirs of George IV." (an authentic book written by an anonymous and well-informed contemporary: Colburn, 1838), Vol. II., p. 407.

[3] That was in 1798, but even his last visit to Ireland was well received, in spite of Byron's "Avatar"; cf. "Barrington's Sketches," Vol. II., p. 277.

[4] For this curious detail cf. "Richardson's Recollections," Vol. II., p. 30.

His charm was the charm of the nicest tact, and of a manner which few could withstand. Certainly not Sheridan, to whom it appealed with increased effect alike as a mannerist, a wit, an actor's son, and a scion of the O'Sheridans. He made Sheridan feel that his Prince was proud of his esteem; he signed himself "Your's affectionately." Sheridan's own manner towards the Prince was praised as never trespassing on their intimacy in public.[1] He upheld him, almost pitifully, as a model of honour, and he protested his trust, even when the fat and leering Adonis of fifty was about to throw him over. Sheridan never used him as a political counter, and on his factotum's disinterestedness, as well as on his talent, the Prince counted and presumed. The patrician Fox, who at this early moment was his paragon's "dear Charles," behaved otherwise. Even after he had expressed his disgust, and much later when he refused to come up from the country to "listen to a lie an hour long," he still continued to approach and exploit him. What Fox did, half from natural rebelliousness, half from political interest, Sheridan did partly out of vanity, but mainly from friendship. That friendship he kept inviolate. It was the Prince who meanly forsook him, and Lord Holland himself owned that nothing surprised him more than the Prince's mysterious desertion of Sheridan.[2] But neither can Sheridan be absolved from abetting the follies which he screened or defended, though it should not be forgotten that the sterner Lord Moira was equally fascinated,[3] or that in future developments Sheridan gave sound advice to the prey of sharpers. Nor should it be

[1] In 1805 Creevey writes, "I never saw Sheridan during the period of three weeks (I think it was) take the least more liberty in the Prince's presence than if it had been the first day he had ever seen him. On the other hand, the Prince always showed by his manner that he thought Sheridan a man that any prince might be proud of as his friend." Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 51.

[2] "For he seemed to be really attached to him." Cf. Moore's "Journal," Vol. II., p. 307. This was in 1812.

[3] In a letter of 1811 to Sheridan's son Tom, Moira warmly declares that the "Prince's heart" was "not at fault," and he adds that both he and Sheridan knew this.

kept out of sight that he was led to anticipate the arrears of revenue from the Duchy of Cornwall, which his father withheld while he was a minor, or that the prodigality of the French princes during their English visits tempted him to further excess. None the less, his orgies, though magnified by malice, were inexcusable. Those who palliated them did so in general terms only, while his vituperators were specific, and used language with Pitt's connivance which Pitt himself would never have dared to employ.[1]

These things were to come. For the moment Fox promised the Prince an income of one hundred thousand and a payment of thirty thousand on account of his debts. When the demands were known, Lord Temple immediately descried an opening, and Shelburne, too, hoped that his enemies would be ruined. Thurlow acted as the stage manager behind the scenes. The King was furious. He wept before the Duke of Portland; he conferred with Lord Temple, who would have replaced the Duke as First Lord of the Treasury had not Fox hurried to soothe the Prince into submission. The Prince, fretted by vexation into a fever, yielded, and the Coalition was saved, for the King and Temple were wise enough to perceive that royal niggardliness would be a bad pretext for a new ministry, and that ere long a better occasion might be found.[2]

Fox was now paramount with the Prince. We are left to guess what part, if any, Sheridan bore in these transactions; but from his future conduct we may be sure that his counsel also would have been to sink his claims and wait for a more

[1] The Prince's affairs in 1784, 1789, 1795 and onwards were exploited by both parties, and a war of pamphlets ensued, in which Miles, Pitt's mercenary, played a prominent part. Cf. "Neptune to the P. of Wales" (1784), "A Letter to the P. of Wales" (by Miles), 1795, and a well-written defence (perhaps by Erskine) entitled "A Review of the Conduct of the P. of Wales from his Entrance into Public Life" (1797). Horne Tooke himself, in his "A Letter to a Friend" (1787), declared that to degrade the revenues of the heir-apparent to those of a private gentleman was a national indignity.

For some of these particulars cf. H. Walpole's "Memoirs of George the Third" under the dates June 11—16, 1783. For the peril on this account of the ministers, cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 88.

favourable opportunity. His speeches throughout these summer months concerned the financial affairs belonging to his office, while, in the autumn, the sensation of Fox's India Bill excluded everything else. If, as was rumoured, Sheridan had tried to qualify for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer by studying figures, one of the results was almost a piece of humour. For it was Sheridan who suggested to Fox the tax on receipts, the debates on which mitigated a somewhat dismal session.[1] Such a tax on receipts would indeed be congenial. One of his utterances on the subject seems quite coloured by personal experience. He hoped "that the retail trader would honestly comply with the express letter of the Bill, and throw the tax on the consumer; for if the consumer let the retail trader pay it, he was sure it would be charged to the consumer with addition in the price of the articles purchased."[2]

Foreign affairs were stagnant, and Fox was manœuvring a northern alliance, but on these heads, which were outside his present province, Sheridan held his peace. He did speak, however, on one other subject. In May Pitt brought forward his second series of resolutions for the reform of representation. Fox and Sheridan always glorified reform, though at no time did either of them take a definite step in this direction.[3] They had welcomed Pitt's first project with enthusiasm. But now their attitude changed. Their breach with him had broadened ever since he took office under Shelburne. In 1782 Pitt's moderate proposals had been praised without criticism. Now Sheridan was "disappointed"; Pitt, he said, did not

[1] Lord Sheffield wrote that Fox's speech on this tax was the best ever made on any such question. Cf. Lord Auckland's "Journal," Vol. I., p. 53.

[2] Speeches, Vol. I., p. 49. Speech of June 15, 1783.

[3] Sheridan, however, may be said to have done so in the case of his perpetual care from 1790 onwards—the reform of the Scots Royal Boroughs. Among his papers is a long letter of that date from a Mr. Fletcher, heartening and thanking him. And Sheridan recorded two bets on the English Reform question, one of May 5, 1793, with Fitzpatrick—100 to 50 guineas—that in two years a *bonâ fide* measure of Reform would be passed; the other, of January 29, 1793, with Boothby Clopton that representation would be reformed in three years.

go far enough. The duration of parliaments should be shortened, since short parliaments "strengthen the intercourse and connexion between the representative and the constituent; and his station being more precarious, he is likely to be attentive to his trust."[1] It may be questioned whether the instigator of the receipt tax would have been overjoyed at annual elections, and in any case the personal note against Pitt was the more marked as the speech ended by twitting Dundas, "the friend of Shelburne and the guide of Pitt,"[2] as one of the new converts to the august youngster. For august—indeed consular—Pitt was, even in his youth. In the words of "The Rolliad,"

> "Above the rest majestically great,
> Behind the infant Atlas of the State,
> The matchless miracle of modern days
> In whom Britannia to the world displays
> A sight to make surrounding nations stare—
> A kingdom trusted to a schoolboy's care."

Already his youth irritated because it awed. He was considered a superior person.[3]

We have now reached the turning-point that first set an impassable gulf between Fox and Pitt, often as the former was to play with the chance of bridging over the chasm. And we have reached, too, the first of Sheridan's equivocal positions—a position as yet unnoticed, one shared with Fox, and one, as will be seen, more due to temperament than to design. The India Bill which Fox brought forward in November, was his crossing of the Rubicon. He staked all, but, unlike Cæsar, he lost it; nor could he ever return to the vantage-ground from

[1] Speeches, Vol. I., p. 44.

[2] "Rolliad."

[3] "I will never," he finely lectured Fox in February, 1783, "engage in political enmities without a public cause. I never will forego such enmities without the public approbation. Nor will I ever be questioned and cast off in the face of this assembly by one virtuous and dissatisfied friend. These, the permanent triumphs of reason and principle over the profligate inconsistencies of party violence; these, the triumphs of virtue over success itself, all not only be mine on the present occasion, but throughout every condition of my life." Yet Grenville, one of his "cousinhood," was so to "cast him off" to his own discredit.

which he had set out. In this matter Sheridan stood between Burke and Fox, the two whirlpools of the vortex—between the politics of Cicero and Catiline, between the principles of the English Lafayette and the promptings of the English Mirabeau. He had made up his mind a year earlier that one of two courses with regard to Warren Hastings's high-handedness ought to be adopted. Either he should be summoned home and called to account, or an India Bill should be brought forward with nothing retrospective about it. Either Warren Hastings must be prosecuted, or the Indian system reformed. A Bill followed by vengeance had never entered his mind. All this he thought in 1782, and he publicly stated these views in 1787 before the House of Commons.[1]

Philip Francis had returned from India as Hastings's arch-enemy. He exerted his malign influence over Burke, and the secret Committees of 1782—the year of the Oude Begum scandal—brought matters to a head,[2] though, even earlier, Lord North himself entertained thoughts of recalling Hastings. Fox's India Bill was not only an upshot of these committee reports, but also a test case against the Crown. It was levelled as much against the King as the proconsul, and the "King's friends" were Warren Hastings's supporters. In these matters, Burke and Fox, master and pupil, were at one, but they met on almost contradictory lines and in an opposite spirit. Both could be violent, but Burke's was the violence of an apostle, Fox's of a mutineer. Both were zealots, but their zeal differed in

[1] Cf. Cobbett's Parl. Deb., Vol. XXV. (March 3 and 6, 1786), col. 1183 *et seq.* This is a point hitherto unnoticed. "With regard to Indian affairs, he had thought there were but two lines of conduct to be pursued after those emphatic resolutions of May 28, 1782 [following on Burke's Committee], had been voted. The one was to call Mr. Hastings immediately by the strong arm of Parliament and punish him exemplarily, the other to bring in an India Bill in which, on grounds of expediency, on account of the times not bearing so strong a measure, and the difference of opinion respecting it, no retrospect should be had, *but all the clauses should look to the future.*"

[2] The effect of these reports is embodied and criticised by two very able "Letters to the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke, by Major Scott" (1783).

tensity. That of Burke bordered on possession. Once seized by an idea or worked on by a person, he frenzied himself into ecstasies which lifted him up to the seventh heaven, or into a fanatical rage which gathered force as it rolled, and belied both his charity and his judgment. He seemed a Dante with the infernal vision spread out before him. For Burke, Warren Hastings typified Anti-Christ, and his dying injunctions were never to rest till the verdict in the devil's favour had been reversed. Burke was an imaginative idealist, yet, half-known to himself, a spice of moroseness and even of retaliation leavened his idealism. Fox was no such idealist; he was cast in an earthy mould, but under his coarser clay heaved a volcanic sympathy which swept men off their feet. While Burke's finer eloquence was less human and read better than it spoke, Fox's haphazard periods[1] expressed a carousal of generous feeling that betrayed the Cavalier leaven in his democratic fibre. Burke, on the other hand, might be termed a Royalist-Puritan, sometimes austere, never licentious, for he had none of the cardinal vices. Both of them liked to shield suffering, to denounce oppression, to require redress; but Fox's enthusiasm voiced the people,[2] Burke's the academy; and when Burke said, years afterwards, that he had met Fox on the road and travelled with him happily a great part of the way, he evinced his ignorance of human nature. Apart from political accidents, they had little in common.

While Fox was intemperate physically, Burke was intellectually intemperate. His exalted imagination ran riot. "Burke raved like a Bedlamite for two hours," is the account of a shrewd ear-witness;[3] nor need we dwell on the mad words and

[1] It was said that Fox began his sentences and God finished them.

[2] Fox was, of course, dubbed the man of the people, and in this year of 1783 the following was written of him:—

> "Voice of the people when he takes the chair,
> Voice of the devil when passion bids him swear," etc.

Cf. "The Beauties of Administration."

[3] Hist. MS. Comm., Abergavenny MS., p. 68. R. Atkinson [the contractor] to J. Robinson, July 30, 1784. The passage begins, "They have

revolting images which used sometimes to befoul the clear stream of his rhetoric.[1] From the theoretical standpoint, too, Burke, it must be repeated, was nothing if not constitutional. For him "liberty" was only a branch on the tree; he was a Whig of the Whigs, a true worshipper of the sacred oak. Fox kindled his glow for "liberty" from profaner fuel: his ardour was wayward, and "liberty" often meant little but licence. Constantly as he invoked the Constitution, it was as a political name that never entered into his being as it did into Burke's. And though he always believed that his new Whiggism was the true Whig doctrine, he was not a Whig at all, but a schismatic. His loose opinions were never articles of faith, and, in Burke's own phrase, he "coined Whig principles from a French die." Yet at this time so great was Fox's influence on Burke, that in one of his speeches this year on the India Bill, Burke made the sole assertion that is to be found throughout the range of his writings of "the natural equality of mankind."[2]

Indian affairs, however, united them; the instincts of the one chimed with the dogmas of the other. If the system was bad, the man was worse; Warren Hastings must be impaled. If the Crown influenced East Indian patronage, it was a gross abuse of prerogative; Fox would tilt against the King, and Burke lop off an excrescence on the Constitution.[3] Next to the classics Burke loved best, he said, the story of

unchained Burke." There were two brothers Atkinson in the firm, which dealt in grain and rum; and Lord North, who thought them rascals, said that the one was a rascal in grain and the other in veneer. Jenkinson and Atkinson were styled in "The Rolliad" "the two Kinsons."

[1] He spoke of "a fœtus in a bottle," of "foul and putrid mucus in which are engendered the whole brood of creeping ascarides," of "excrement," of "vermin on a carcase" as applied to his opponents, of "offal" which fattened "the region-kites," of "Sir Elijah Impey's fox smell," and in a jocular vein he more than once spoke of "in three skips of a louse."

[2] Burke's celebrated speech of November 25, 1783, on Fox's second Bill; cf. Parl. Deb., Vol. XXIII., 1312; Burke's Works, Vol. IV., p. 3; and Adolphus, Vol. I., p. 52.

[3] In his joint "Representation" with Windham of June 14 in the following year, Burke laboured to prove that all previous invasions of charters had proceeded from the Crown, and their redress from Parliament.



EDMUND BURKE

(from an old engraving after a medallion).

Little Red Riding Hood, and in that story he might find an allegory of the situation. Fox, too, in a speech so early as the February of this year—the speech where he paused with dramatic emphasis in the Horatian tag about fortune, and striking the table, ended by protesting his quest after "dowerless poverty"—Fox said that while the King's prerogative to choose ministers must be admitted, the people were privileged to annul his nomination. The unfortunate part of the business was that the moment chosen for such heroics was one jumping with political interest and not free from personal motives. Even Burke had resented the Company's treatment of a kinsman; while, sad to relate, six years later, when the Prince was in the ascendant, even Burke asked for a seat on Pitt's Board of Control, pleading long service and "adherence."[1] Nor had Burke always been of the same mind regarding India. In 1774 he went so far as to censure the ministers for exposing the Company's affairs "with all the parade of indiscreet declamation," while he termed that year's two inquiries "our dear-bought East India Committees."[2] Fox, for his part, hoped, if his Bill succeeded, to emerge a dictator, wipe out his opponents and make all things new. If it failed, so much the worse for the pirates who might wreck it. Some opportunism thus tinged their nobler aspects. Fox owned the ambition that "o'erleaps itself," and both, to quote Burke, could be "benevolent from spite."

Sheridan's temper and attitude were in the middle line. He was hardly an enthusiast. True, he shared the sentimental

[1] Hist. MS. Comm., Abergavenny MS., p. 70: "1789, January 29. The Prince is to give his answer to-morrow at three. There are apprehensions of Burke's being in the Board of Controul. He insists upon it for the services and adherence of thirty years. If they will agree, the fat will be in the fire. A hint to the P[rince] would prevent it. . . ." James Macpherson to John Robinson. The passage has been quoted, *ante*, Vol. I., p. 151. For Burke's kinsman a post had been created at Tanjore. It was said (and with some reason) that Burke wished the places of Hastings, Wheler and Macpherson to be filled by personal friends. Cf. the "Two Letters to Burke" of 1783, by John Scott, afterwards Lord Eldon, p. 60.

[2] Cf. his famous speech of April 19, 1774.

sympathy and the insurgent instincts of Fox, but he was far less abstract in outlook or headstrong in bearing. He saw round the question. He believed in the India Bill's purport, he defended it most ably and vehemently, and he afterwards printed his arguments for its superiority to Pitt's both in detail and principle. The dramatic aspect of the problem naturally engrossed him. He melted at "the loud cry of trampled Hindostan," and he rejoiced to humiliate sleek monopolists gorged with their Eastern plunder. But, unlike Fox, he did not wish to stake political existence on the mere form of an Act of Parliament. And he had little or none of Burke's ideality. Much as he resented injustice and fumed over it, the comedian saw absurdity in extremes. He was unactuated by revenge and absolutely good-tempered. If Parliament checked Indian misgovernment, the mischief was over, and there would be no need for the sacrifice of an exceptional governor whose reappointment had been ministerially confirmed, and whose resignation had been unanimously refused. If, however, Parliament refused to remedy the mischief, then Warren Hastings must be impeached. That was Sheridan's view, a tenable view that certainly was not Burke's, or Fox's if the opening of his speech on the India Bill be evidence; and in connection with Fox, this attitude led Sheridan into the first of what we have termed his equivocal positions. Sheridan, too, never shared Fox's opinion that the India Bill would perpetuate the Whigs: he knew that the Coalition was doomed. While Burke soared into the clouds, and Fox dived into the depths, Sheridan remained a man of the world; his wit and common sense were heartily at their service. Wraxall rightly observes, "There is good reason to believe that Sheridan deprecated from the beginning the too great energy, or rather the confiscation and ambition, which characterised the East India Bill," and what Wraxall says, Sir James Mackintosh afterwards confirmed.[1]

[1] Cf. Wraxall's "Memoirs," Vol. III., p. 374, and Moore's "Journal," Vol. II., p. 316: "It is said Sheridan was against the India Bill."

## AN EQUIVOCAL POSITION

Just before Fox brought in his Bill a queer and unrecorded incident happened. It had occurred to Fox that the friends of Warren Hastings might be sounded, and to Sheridan that he might be saved. The "Bengal Squad" were powerful in the House; the Bill on which so much depended might be wrecked by their antagonism. Warren Hastings had not yet been called home, but his recall had been settled, and it was rumoured that he would soon return to England. At first Sheridan attempted some accommodation by an informal conference with Halhed, who had now come back from India, and then, with Fox's cognisance, he employed a mutual friend to seek an interview with the Governor's representative, Major Scott—the butt of "The Rolliad" in punning conjunction with the future Eldon—"the Major and the minor Scott." This mutual friend turned out to be none other than Sheridan's old Harrow pedagogue, Dr. Parr, while his old Harrow colleague, Halhed, was again present at this meeting.[1] Scott remained under the impression that a bargain was designed, but he had no power to treat. The whole question was raised in Parliament a year after Warren Hastings had come back, and the year before his trial. Sheridan then fully explained his opinions and his conduct. The "intended India Bill was certainly," he said, "mentioned, but merely as a matter of conversation, and not as a proposition. There had not been the most distant idea of bartering with Mr. Hastings for his support of the Bill." He had only "sent a friend to the honourable gentleman opposite to know whether Mr. Hastings would come back if recalled." The Major, after re-consulting "the gentleman whom he had seen originally on the business," admitted his fault of memory and confirmed "every syllable" that had fallen from Sheridan's lips. Fox flatly repudiated the slightest idea of "proposal or accommodation." "It had been privately suggested in conversation that, Hastings being a very powerful man, *it might make the*

[1] For the first meeting (which is new matter), cf. "Warren Hastings's Letters to his Wife," p. 314. For the second, cf. Moore's "Journal," Vol. II., p. 147. This information came from Parr himself.

*India Bill go easier, if the idea of prosecuting him were given up.*"[1] Fox had dwelt on "the necessity for his recall." Why then did he concur in a conference with Scott, and, by his own admission, what object apart from the India Bill could be served by an inquiry as to whether Hastings would return? Idle curiosity was obviously no motive. A *Morning Chronicle* of November, 1783, had put the public in possession of Fox's motion for the Bill before the speech was delivered, and approaches or compromise were evidently in process. When we remember that in 1787 Fox as flatly denied the Prince's marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, and that Sheridan had then to smooth over the boggle much as he smoothed it over now, it is hard to believe that if the East India magnates had supported the Bill, much more (but for Burke) would have been heard of Warren Hastings's impeachment.[2]

The great gamble of Fox's venture began early in November. He introduced his East India Bill with loose statements about the Company's position, branding it as insolvent when, as a matter of fact, all acceptances could easily have been met. As the Bill itself emerged, however, and Pitt pressed the truth home, he withdrew these charges, which are only notable as betraying the haste with which the enactment had been framed. There were two alternative schemes, the last of which was mainly Burke's, and when the Bill's final form is dispassionately examined, it must be confessed that it met with extremely unfair play. Suspect as it was, mixed and personal in motive, it was none the less a genuine effort to solve an acknowledged scandal. What was objectionable in its details could easily have been mended, had any real wish to benefit India been the aim of its opponents, and it was thrown out not on principle but by

[1] For the preceding facts, cf. Cobbett's Parl. Deb., Vol. XXV. (March 3 and 6, 1786), col. 1183 *et seq.*

[2] In Moore's account of his conversation with Dr. Parr on the subject of the interview, he says: "Fox, who knew nothing of the matter, had nothing to say in reply," and "it appeared that the negotiation had been set on foot without the knowledge of Fox and that Sheridan was the chief agent in it" (cf. Moore's "Journal," Vol. II., p. 147), but such is not the effect of Fox's own words in the House.

cabal. For sixteen years the need had been owned of stricter parliamentary control over a close and unscrupulous corporation that administered a revenue of seven millions sterling, commanded an army of sixty thousand men, and disposed of the lives and fortunes of thirty millions of their fellow-creatures. A Committee of the whole House had considered its reform during 1767; in 1772 two such Committees had been appointed, and in the years 1773 and 1780 Acts of Parliament had been passed to regulate its routine and guard against its abuses; while in pursuance of both those Acts fresh Committees had sat, and fresh recommendations had been made. Dundas, who aimed at engrossing the Indian patronage as he had already begun to absorb the Scottish—Dundas, who already exercised over Pitt an influence far greater than he had wielded over Shelburne, had prepared a Bill of his own. Burke kept the scheme in his pocket which Fox adopted, and in the following year Pitt produced the successful measure which Burke again aided,[1] but which Dundas prescribed. Some reform was clearly inevitable; the sole question was the spirit in which it ought to be framed. Fox's experiment harboured grave defects as well as great merits. It was a patchwork of good and dubious intentions. It transferred the whole direction and property of the chartered Company to seven managers and eight "assistants"; the former represented the old directors, the latter the proprietors. The board was to be held at home under the scrutiny of Parliament. All was to be open, and most was in the nature of a trust. But Fox's eagerness to engross power protruded. For the present, Parliament was to name all the members of this board till four or five years or any "sufficient" time had elapsed; ultimately their appointment was to be in the Crown. All that the proprietors might do was to fill up vacancies in the body of assistants.

Here came the rub. When the names of its members were published, and Lord Fitzwilliam, Rockingham's heir, headed the list, they were all Government nominees. For an indefinite

[1] Sheridan MSS., Mrs. Tickell's Corr.

space the whole management and patronage were to be vested in the Coalition's bodyguard. Fox could, and it was urged would, be "the Emperor of the East," and by virtue of such influence a despot in the West. It was treason, confiscation, un-English, unconstitutional.[1] Nor did it go far enough for his friends. The anti-Court party, whom now Fox headed, was equally indignant. At the close of the "sufficient" interval the King, who claimed his right to choose ministers, would be able to lavish lacs and pagodas for their reward; prerogative was being wheedled. On the other side, again, the Court party was not hoodwinked by this eventual reversion to the Crown. It was a false pretence, and who knew how Fox might provoke his forces against the Throne, or even usurp it? He had created "a fourth estate," and already (they maintained, though Sheridan disproved it[2]) the King's prerogative had been invaded. The nation at large knew not what to make of a Bill so two-edged, so like the Coalition itself. Country squires shook their heads and cursed the rascals. Traders scented theft, and swore that Hastings's patriot-exactions paled into insignificance beside it. Leadenhall Street trembled at the sight of a rival monopoly, and one of its magnates even died of the fright. It was remembered amid all the cant of disinterestedness and the rant about profusion, that, this very session, Pitt, bringing forward an Exchequer Regulation Bill, had specified a sum of £340 paid to the Secretary of the Treasury for "whipcord," and £1,300 for the First Minister's private stationery. Pitt and Grenville unmasked Fox's covert ambitions, and his proposed invasion of a charter. "The pretended relief to Asia," cried Pitt, "was grounded on injustice and violence in Europe. Property was menaced." Honest

[1] Among other well-considered pamphlets on this point, cf. William Pulteney's "Effects to be Expected from the East India Bill" (1784), where, after careful examination of the clauses, he is convinced that perpetual patronage and power are intended.

[2] Cf. p. 27 of his subsequent excellent criticism in his "Comparative Statement of the Two Bills for the Better Government of the British Possessions in India," London, 1778 (dedicated to his colleague Monckton).

Marten in the House of Commons wished for a starling that might din "Coalition, Coalition," into the ears of its members, and Sheridan remarked that a marten would obviously be apter for the omen than a starling. Outside the House, "No Grand Mogul, no India tyrant!" hooted the rabble. The freeholders of Middlesex and even of Fox's stronghold, Westminster, protested.[1] Everywhere alarm reigned, and suspicion. Panic for a moment united the people and their King.

All this Sheridan felt. The Bill was too violent, but he thought it a right Bill, and its cause would triumph in the end. Huge majorities attended its every stage, and while Thurlow plotted in the palace, and Temple sat in cool counsel with his sullen master, his Majesty's faithful Commons cheered this dawning millennium to the echo. Burke did more. In the superb speech with which he crowned the proceedings, looking back on India's "map of misrule" and forward to an age of chivalry, his peroration heroised the "author" of the dream. The task, he said, had fallen to one worthy of it, who had risked his ease, his security, his interest, his power, even his darling popularity, for the benefit of a people he had never seen. He was traduced, but obloquy was precious to a prophet. "This is the road that all heroes have trod before him." "He is doing indeed a great good, such as rarely falls to the lot, and almost as rarely coincides with the desires, of any man. Let him use his time. Let him give the whole length of his reins to his benevolence. . . . He may live long—he may do much. But here is the summit. He never can exceed what he does this day." Even his faults, he urged, had nothing in them to quench the fire of great virtues. "In those faults there is no mixture of hypocrisy, of pride, of ferocity, of complexional despotism." As the free-living Henry the Fourth of France had longed that he might survive the day when every peasant in his kingdom should have a fowl in his pot, so Fox wished to secure the rice in his pot to every ryot in India; and

[1] These latter instances happened a little later in February, 1784, when they induced Fox to say that he would modify his Bill, but they represent the feeling of a few months earlier.

he quoted the sounding lines that celebrated Cicero's emancipating ardour:—

> "Ille super Gangem, super exanditus et Indos
> Implebit terras voce, et furialia bella
> Fulmine compescit linguæ,"

which may thus be rendered:—

> "His voice beyond the Indies and their flood
> Resounding, fills the lands that suffer wrong;
> Acclaimed above the battle and the blood,
> He stays them by the lightning of his tongue."[1]

Yet only seven years were to elapse before Burke's philippics against Fox rang out as finely as this laudation. Sheridan spoke in a different key. True, he defended the Bill and attacked its enemies by contrast and comparison, just as he was to do some years later in his closely reasoned pamphlet. But now satire was his weapon. He turned the laugh against Dundas's project. The ex-Lord Advocate, he said, had gone through much of his Bill with him in the preceding year. That Bill had clothed Lord Cornwallis with power ten times more dangerous and despotic, as he could prove, did not the clock forbid; so "plain" was this and "palpable," that he only wondered how Dundas could "keep his countenance." And then he opened his fusillade. A whole dictionary of quotations had been laid under contribution. On Fox's side, General Burgoyne had posted in hot haste from Ireland to cite the sixth Æneid and apply its pains of Tartarus to Hastings.[2] He, of course, was left untouched. But against the Bill, Wilberforce, Scott, and Arden had drawn on Milton, the Apocalypse, and

[1] Speech of December 1, 1783. A splendid passage also denounced the dereliction of India and the temptations to greed which its plunder offered to young Englishmen, "animated with all the avarice of age and the impetuous ardour of youth, while nothing presents itself to the view of the unhappy natives, except an interminable prospect of new flights of voracious birds of passage." "England has erected neither churches nor hospitals, nor schools nor palaces. If to-morrow we were expelled from Hindostan," nothing would remain to show its possession "by any better tenants than the orang-outang or tiger."

[2] Cf. Adolphus, Vol. I., p. 47.

Shakespeare. Sheridan hoisted each with his own petard, sometimes by verses from the self-same page. Wilberforce had quoted "Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable"; Sheridan's reply is missing. Arden had quoted "He would be crowned" from "Julius Cæsar," and Sheridan retorted by "the bright day that brings forth the adder." But Wilberforce had also compared the seven managers and eight "assistants" to "seven physicians and eight apothecaries come to put the patient to death *secundum artem*." And the future Lord Eldon's profane piety had ransacked the Book of Revelations. Fox was likened to the seven-crowned beast rising up out of the sea to whom "there was given a mouth speaking great things."—"Alas, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships, in one hour is made desolate." Sheridan at once pointed out the discrepancy between the Scriptural beast's tenure of power and that conceded by the measure: "forty-and-two months" in the one case, forty-eight in the other; and he reminded the House of a more fitting figure, that of the seven angels clothed in pure white linen, the spotless symbols of the new Commissioners. Thus much of an impromptu which convulsed its hearers, may be revived by collation;[1] nor should it be omitted that in 1788, when the India Control Bill was being agitated, he reverted to Wilberforce's present illustration and applied the medical simile to Dundas, "the doctor of Control" who prescribed "Scots pills for Oriental disorders." It is to be regretted that so little survives of Sheridan's deliverances on the India Bill in the meagre reports available. "No individual distinguished himself more," says Wraxall, who heard him, "throughout the whole progress of these interesting proceedings, than Sheridan, whose matchless endowments of mind, equally adapted to contests of wit or of argument, and ever under the control of imperturbable temper, enabled him to

[1] Cf. the three accounts which add to each other, Cobbett's Parl. Deb., Vol. XXIV., col. 51; Speeches, Vol. I., p. 59 (third reading of the Bill, December 8, 1783); and Wraxall, Vol. III., pp. 169, 170, where, though Sheridan is not named, the fragment in the published report of his speech is evidently supplemented.

extend invaluable assistance to the minister."[1] And yet in Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates (which Hansard edited in 1800) not a syllable stands of Sheridan's utterance at the thrilling moments which marked the progress of these India Bills, though he was twice a teller for the Noes, the second time, when Burke delivered his great oration.[2]

On the night of December 8 the supreme moment of the third reading arrived. Fox would brook no delay, the division must be taken. In vain did Scott quote Desdemona's prayer (and with the more sting because Fox's complexion matched Othello's)—"Kill me not to-night, my lord! let me live one day." In vain did Wilkes, the demagogue, stigmatise the whole as an imposture. In vain, to the wonder of the House, did Henry Flood, fresh from the Irish Parliament and just elected for Winchester, rise to make his maiden speech, which cursed the Bill altogether. In vain did Aristides-Powys urge that its voice was the voice of Jacob, but its hands were the hands of Esau. The ministers triumphed. Only 102 followed Pitt into the lobby, 208 vindicated the Coalition.

Fox, heading a jubilant procession, carried his Bill up to the Lords, where it was ordered to be read a second time and printed. He fondly fancied that he had secured its passage through the Upper House, and the royal veto never entered into his calculations. Strange to relate, some of the chief "King's friends," including Lord Stormont, his nominee in the Cabinet, had voted for Fox. But the victory was illusive. Underground workings had long sapped his citadel, and in less than a fortnight it tumbled to the ground. Two archbishops, an ex-minister, the ex-Chancellor and the head of Pitt's "cousinhood,"[3] were at the bottom of the plot, while Jenkinson and Robinson (the Taper and the Tadpole) pulled the wires with

[1] Wraxall, Vol. III., p. 184, Arden cited.

[2] On December 1, the night of the motion for going into committee. He was one of the tellers also on December 1. No speech of his is recorded on November 18, 20, 24 (when petitions against the Bill were presented), 27 (the long debate on the second reading), or December 1.

[3] Lord Temple's father was a brother of Pitt's mother.

a secret influence which Fox denounced in vain. Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury, like his brother-in-law, Eden, supposed to be a Foxite; Markham, Archbishop of York, one of the Prince's first preceptors; Lord Shelburne, who insisted that the Lords represented the people more truly than the Commons;[1] Thurlow, who had never forgiven his exile, and Temple, who had resolved to establish his kinsman, Pitt, were the confederates in this conspiracy. It could only be justified by Fox's overbearing precipitation, and his disaccord not only with the nation but with a Sovereign who, even if the Bill had passed, would have stubbornly withheld his assent. Thurlow glowered behind the scenes, but Temple went further, stretching his Privy Councillor's privilege to the utmost. He promptly circulated cards enjoining every peer who valued loyalty to throw out a Bill which would seat Charles Fox on the throne. On December 17 the House of Lords rejected Fox's India Bill by nineteen votes.

And now George asserted his right to eject his servants. The next day, despite protests from the Commons, Lord Temple himself received the seals of the Under-Secretaries and dispatched letters of dismissal to the rest. Assailed on all hands for his manœuvre, he then resigned them; and on the 22nd, not Shelburne, as had been feared, but the far-seeing Pitt, became First Minister at the age of twenty-four. First Minister, in no nominal sense, he was to remain. No commoner had won this distinction since, twenty-six years earlier, Pitt's father, at twice his age, had done the same. The son's eminence was more marked because, with three exceptions outside the law officers,[2] all his colleagues were peers. The East India Bill had rung the knell of the Coalition, and Fox, adopting Burke's

[1] Speech of April 8, 1778, where he claimed that the Lords had a right to amend a money Bill. The Duke of Richmond too, Fox's uncle, stated in his address of 1783 to the Irish Volunteers, that when the people were restored by reform to their rights, the other branches of the legislature should also resume theirs, and that several of the powers exercised by the Commons were "usurpations."

[2] Dundas, Grenville, and Sir George Young.

Eastern imagery, exclaimed that a measure framed to emancipate thirty millions had been strangled "by an infamous string of bedchamber janissaries." But Dr. Johnson's soberer verdict was quite as true: the nation had decided in favour of the King's sceptre against the tribune's tongue.[1] "Dearest Moll," wrote Fox's intimate, Fitzpatrick, to his *chère amie*, Mrs. Benwell, then in Paris, "I send you the news of the day. On Thursday last Charles and Lord North were turned out, on Friday Lord Temple and Mr. Pitt kissed hands, and we all resigned. On Saturday and Sunday they tried to make a ministry and failed. On Monday Lord Temple resigned. It is supposed the old ministry *must* be reinstated, but I suppose there will be a long struggle first. Adieu, I am in eager expectation of a letter from you, for neither politics, business, nor revolutions of any sort can make me forget or cease for one moment to love you. Pray write."[2] Write, doubtless, she did, and with prayers that Charles the giant-killer might soon regain his post of vantage.

Had the King but seen this edifying epistle, he would have felt doubly pleased in having thus outwitted the reckless abettor of a profligate son, who, however, since voting for Fox in November, now discreetly refrained from the princely interference in politics which Fox defended in public.[3]

Events had borne out Sheridan's first misgivings. In vain did he try to prove that this Coalition was no worse than its

[1] "Here is a man who has divided the kingdom with Cæsar, so that it was a doubt whether the nation should be ruled by the sceptre of George III. or the tongue of Fox."

[2] Sheridan MSS. R. Fitzpatrick to Mary Benwell, "LONDON, Tuesday, December 22nd, 1783." He was in constant communication with her, and Fox in this very year addressed to the same frail partisan a curious document attesting his *penchant* for Mrs. Robinson.

[3] In January, 1784 (answering the pious Sir Richard Hill): "God forbid that a royal personage should not participate in political concerns! Where can he so well imbibe a knowledge of the principles of our Constitution as within these walls? How can he better illustrate the excellence of his character than by thus blending personal respect for the King his father with attachment to his country?"

forerunners; that Pitt's Treasury bench also presented the same spectacle of incongruous union.[1] Once more he and Fox were thrown on their beam-ends, and twenty-two years had to elapse before they could resume office. But though the bell had tolled for the Coalition's funeral, it had not yet been buried. A First Minister daring to govern in the teeth of an enormous majority in the House of Commons was a case that might well inspire hope and redouble their energy. If only they could prevent the King, or rather Pitt, from dissolving (though this was the constitutional course[2]), they might yet be revenged by making government impossible. The fallen angels had still a future: "all was not lost." "It is supposed that the old ministry *must* be reinstated."

[1] Speech of Censure on Ministers, February 3, 1784, Speeches, Vol. I., p. 67; and cf. Wraxall, Vol. III., p. 287.

[2] Lord Shelburne had so stated it some years before. Lord Somers's authority to the contrary could only apply to repeated dissolutions by the Crown, and the real recourse was to the nation. Cf. Lord J. Russell in Fox's Corr., Vol. II., pp. 229—231.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FIGHT WITH PITT

(January, 1784—March, 1785)

"The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the Crown."

A First Minister defying the Lower House and standing for the Lords and the nation—a House of Commons contradicting the country—such was the position when Parliament assembled after a brief Christmas recess. The constituent limb of the body politic was out of gear with the representative. Pitt had succeeded through backstairs influence, and yet Fox dreaded an appeal to the people. That is his worst impeachment. If the King had abused his prerogative in arbitrarily dismissing ministers, Fox had been equally high-handed in pressing his Bill on an unwilling people, and he ought to have resigned. No doubt Pitt, too, should have lost no time in consulting the country; but he was well advised in his short breathing space, for he knew how much the Coalitionists must continue to prejudice themselves. He had crept into power much as Harley had done in the last years of Queen Anne, and like Harley in 1711, he determined to dissolve when he should choose.[1] But for the moment he sought to govern in the teeth of overwhelming majorities, and Burke, surely, was right in arguing that ministers could not thus disregard representatives. Burke, however, always a fanatic for the Commons, now equally disregarded the electors of men whose acts had effaced confidence. And neither he nor Fox were justified in their pettifogging obstruction and intimidation. That Pitt

[1] On December 22 and 23, when the House resolved itself into a Committee on the state of the nation, Erskine made a motion for the express purpose of sounding Pitt on dissolution, and Pitt authorised Bankes to say that he had no intention either to prorogue or dissolve. Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 68.



RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

from the original portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

(in the possession of Algernon Sheridan, Esquire).

should not dissolve they were determined.[1] Renewed though impossible efforts were momentarily made for a junction between Fox and Pitt. They had been seen, it was said, in amicable converse, and North had protested himself no obstacle to any accommodation between them.[2] But this attempt fell through. Day and night the Whig leaders assembled at Burlington House. Mrs. Tickell wrote that Sheridan was now the mainstay of his party; that one of their meetings took place at his own abode; and that he was on the spot, hard at work, when "friend Charles" was less creditably engaged on a night when they sent for him. Sheridan, she adds, was now of "more consequence to them than ever," and was "monstrously fagged with their nightly consultations." And so she consoled his wife, who languished alone at Delapré Abbey.

The times were indeed anxious for what Sheridan soon termed the "ex-party," and a fight ensued that taxed each side to the utmost. "If Mr. Pitt succeeds," wrote the young Duchess of Devonshire, the centre and mouthpiece of the Foxites, "he will have brought about an event which he himself, as well as every Englishman, will repent ever after—for if he and the King conquer the House of Commons, he will destroy the consequence of that House and make the Government quite absolute."[3] For a space Pitt behaved like a minister of the Crown, and party rancour mounted higher than ever since the days of Sacheverell. Even great ladies did not mince their words. "Damn Fox," roared the Duchess of Rutland before a full house at the opera; "damn Pitt," rejoined Lady Maria Waldegrave, and Lady Sefton's raillery added that "this was a great *Aria* in the history of England."[4] Surely these were

[1] Mrs. Tickell, in a letter of this period, says that the "country gentlemen" desired a "general coalition" with Pitt, but that in her opinion this would not do at all. "However, one thing we think ourselves sure of, which is no Dissolution." Even later she thinks "Pitt must resign at all events." Sheridan MSS.

[2] Sheridan MSS., Tickell Corr.

[3] The Duchess to her mother, Lady Spencer, February 8, 1784. (Printed in the *Anglo-Saxon Review* for September, 1899.)

[4] The Duchess to her mother, March 20, 1784.

elegant pastimes for a duchess who had just endowed two charity schools in commemoration of her first daughter's birth, composed a march for the music of "La Reine de Golconde," and vied with Mrs. Crewe in her fancy for negro pages.[1] But no partisans are more zealous than women, and at this very time Mrs. Tickell called Pitt "a poor half-devil that deserves to be scouted."

In the House of Commons, which met on January 12, the proceedings were stormy. Pitt stoutly refused to give the slightest assurance that he would not dissolve, and he was vilified for his youth, his subservience to the King and the trickery which had worsted the Coalition.[2] Sheridan attacked him as "mean and hypocritical." Apart, he said, from the methods of supplanting the late ministry, Pitt had violated an express pledge, and he quoted an analogy from the journals in the reign of Charles II. to point the disasters of secret influence. It was not a little remarkable, he laughed, that the agent's name in that instance had also been Temple, and he rounded on Dundas for a speech that sounded like "hints for paragraphs and sketches for prints." Such was the right honourable gentleman's new style of an "appeal to the people." During the next few days, too, Lord Surrey (afterwards Duke of Norfolk) jumped up every two minutes with an aggressive motion, while Pitt found a strange champion in one of the members for London, Sir Watkin Lewis, who, thirty years onwards, was to prove Sheridan's companion in a spunging-house. On January 16 Sheridan rose again. He reminded the House that before Lord North went out for the first time, a member had quoted from Shakespeare:

> ". . . The times have been
> That when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end —— "

[1] From the Duchess's MS. letters to her mother. Next year the Duchess of Gordon created a riot at the opera by kissing the Duc de Chartres; but these were days when Adhémar, the French Ambassador, got into a scrape for placing his palsied "leg on Lady Parker's lap," and being unable to remove it!

[2] Mrs. Tickell wrote that her husband took "a chosen band" to witness the proceedings of "this great day."

Yet now the souls of the present ministry had vanished, though their bodies, like empty forms, still kept their places, and he might add to the former quotation :—

> ". . . But now they rise again
> With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
> And push us from our stools,
> Threatening the House with fifty deaths or dissolutions." [1]

Uproar of every description signalised the further debates, but Pitt stood his ground and moved to bring in his own India Bill, which was rejected on January 23. Fox sneered at it as an "individual opinion," and ten days later, Fox's faithful squire, Coke of Norfolk, moved to censure the ministers. Sheridan braced himself for an effort and made a powerful speech—the one which referred to his disapproval of the Coalition when it was formed. Lord Mulgrave, in aid of Pitt, had affirmed that in the appointment of ministers the Crown ought not to regard the support of the House of Commons, and he had cited that Whig oracle, Lord Somers. But Sheridan exposed the precedent, which really referred to the case of an impeachment. Pitt, too, had asserted that he "stood firm in the fortress of the Constitution," but where, urged Sheridan, was the constitutional fortress that was not garrisoned by the Lower House ? "There might possibly indeed be a lieutenant-governor of the fort who, though he did not mix in the battle, was not less the commander, though his orders were not publicly delivered. The House of Commons ought to inspect the works and see that no sap was carrying on that might dismantle it. The present ministers were labouring to erect a fabric that might shield them against every attack ; but they were erecting it on ground that was already undermined ; and however strong the pillars might be, however solid and firm the buttresses, however well turned the arches, yet the foundation must be weak when the ground was undermined ; not only the building could not stand, but the very weight of it would precipitate its fall. Secret influence was what undermined the

[1] For these two speeches cf. Sheridan's Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 62, 65.

whole; it constituted a fourth estate in the Constitution, for it did not belong to the King, it did not belong to the Lords, it did not belong to the Commons. . . . The King would have forced upon him an administration which he could not dismiss." The allusion to "a fourth estate" was a happy hit at those who impugned Fox for creating one. He warmly defended Fox and the late administration as disinterested. He had called Pitt a King's minion and compared him to James I.'s Duke of Buckingham; he would not retract, for all who owed promotion to the personal favour of the Crown were favourites and deserved the name. But despite Sheridan's eloquence, the scales were already turning, and whereas three weeks before, the division had shown a majority of 142 against ministers, it was now reduced by nearly one-sixth.[1]

Sheridan had already captured his audience, but he had not yet attained the commanding position which he held after 1788. He was regarded more as a great wit and rhetorician than as a great orator. Still more was he regarded as an indefatigable worker in the serious business of his party. He had yet to be lessoned in the magnitude of affairs and the width of view which alone can handle them. The present issues, unlike the world-wide problems that ensued, were mainly technical, and Sheridan brought ingenuity to tackle them. But one gift he owned, apart from fluent fancy or cool judgment, which already enchained his hearers. His voice, though occasionally tending to thickness, was singularly musical, vibrating to every mood that modulated it. Fox barked—if contemporaries are to be trusted; Burke shrieked, and Pitt, always stately and imposing, spoke sometimes as if "a ball of worsted was in his mouth." Sheridan had no such drawbacks; he sang his listeners into attention. And at this period his appearance prepossessed the most critical. "His countenance and features," wrote Wraxall, who now listened to him in the House, "had in them something peculiarly pleasing, indicative at once of intellect, humour, and gaiety. All these characteristics played about his lips when speaking, and operated with

[1] Twenty-four. Cf. Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 67—71.

inconceivable attraction; for they anticipated, as it were, to the eye, the effect produced by his oratory on the ear, thus opening for him a sure way to the heart or the understanding."[1] Of all spells, that of oratory is the hardest to revive, and these characteristics must be remembered in estimating the effects of his rhetoric.

Events now quickened towards a close. Addresses against the ministers poured in from Middlesex and Westminster; Fox was mobbed, Pitt was mobbed, the Opposition majority was reduced to seven, and Fox bitterly complained of deserters. Though Alderman Sawbridge renewed a motion for parliamentary reform, on which Sheridan spoke, nothing was heard but the dissolution of Parliament. Fresh efforts were tried to reconcile Fox to Pitt and to form a coalition between them. But the two extremes could not meet; and matters were brought to a head by a daring theft of the Great Seal from Lord Thurlow's house in Great Ormond Street. "Old Hurlo Thrumbo," as they called him, stood thunderstruck. This happened on the morning of March 24, and on the same day Parliament was dissolved. Burke styled it "a penal dissolution."[2] The Duchess of Devonshire announced the great news to her mother with the addition that she "was dressing" and that "the Duke of Portland and C. Fox" were writing in her room. The days, perhaps, have gone by when a political chieftainess can assemble the heads of her party in a dressing-room; ladies then exercised more political influence, though they claimed it less.

[1] Cf. Wraxall, Vol. III., p. 368. He confirms the general opinion of his voice as "singularly mellifluous," and he contrasts his countenance in his prime with its degeneration in later days. It should, however, be stated that drink was not the sole cause, for his sister Elizabeth, at the close of this very year of 1784, writes as follows:—"Dick sat beside me the whole night and often renewed the subject of my father. He is, I think, greatly altered; he is altogether a much larger man than I had formed an idea of—has *a good deal of scurvy in his face*, in his manner very kind, but rather graver than I expected; indeed, I should rather say melancholy than grave. He complains of Charles's neglect a good deal." LeFanu MS. On this occasion he spoke much to his sister about Ireland.

[2] Cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 245.

At the general election "Fox's martyrs" were hewed hip and thigh. Lord John Cavendish was beaten at York. Seats were lost by Coke of Norfolk, of whom (though he became Earl of Leicester) Sheridan used the phrase that he disdained to hide his head in a coronet; and at Brentford by George Byng, of whom Sheridan then quoted "I could have better spared a better man." But Sheridan had the good fortune to head the poll at Stafford, a convincing proof of his popularity. The election bill of this contest remains among his papers. It amounted to over thirteen hundred guineas, and in these days it may be of some interest to record a few of the items. Forty pounds were spent in ale tickets, ten in "swearing young burgesses." The bulk of the whole went to the burgesses at large. Five guineas enriched the Infirmary, two rejoiced "clergymen's widows," another two, other beneficiaries. Beer covered a multitude of sins, and clearly prevailed over benevolence, though we learn elsewhere that so much as a hundred guineas was allotted to "charity."[1] Six years later an account was drawn up of Sheridan's total outlay for these years of parliamentary life. It amounted to £2,165 5s., and his annual expenses to about £143. These figures, naturally, meant much more then than they would mean to-day.

But the great event of this year was Fox's historic Westminster election, in which the Duchess of Devonshire played her traditional part, the Prince of Wales appeared as the prince of democrats, and Sheridan, and his wife, as their unflagging supporters. Pitt's attempt to undo it nearly restored Fox to the favour which he had forfeited, while Georgiana of Devon, as the Phrygian-capped goddess of liberty, repopularised him.

> "E'en cobblers she canvassed, they would not refuse
> But huzza'd for Fox and no wooden shoes;
> She canvassed the tailors, and asked for their votes,
> They all gave her plumpers, and cried 'No turncoats!'
> Then let each of us say,
> 'May the D——l take Wray,
> And let Charley and Liberty carry the day.'"

[1] "He wisely recollected," adds the squibster, "that charity covers a multitude of sins." Cf. "Westminster Election" (1785), p. 217.

And she claimed her empire as the queen of hearts:—

> "Arrayed in matchless beauty, Devon's fair
> In Fox's favour takes a zealous part,
> But oh! where'er the pilferer comes—beware!
> She supplicates a vote, and steals a heart."[1]

She and her sister, Lady Harriet Duncannon, were called "the most lovely portraits that ever appeared on a *canvass*."

An eighteenth-century election usually resembled an organised riot, but this critical contest took the shape of veritable Saturnalia. For forty days the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, where the hustings drew nightly crowds to hear the numbers, combined all the elements of a prize-fight and a masquerade. Fox and his opponents, Lord Hood and Sir Cecil Wray, "the Fox, the Lion and the Ass," were the spectacles of the hour, and for them the theatres were thinned and the Opera well nigh forsaken. Neither side stinted their lungs, their fisticuffs or their abuse, while a bevy of fine ladies cast decorum to the winds and plunged into the fray; a kiss, a vote, and "The devil take the hindmost," were the mottoes. Bullies and chairmen elbowed bucks and dames of high degree. Fox, as "Black Reynard," moved everywhere, ready with his retort; nor did he fail to make merry over the fact that his enemies always assembled in auction-rooms.[2] The voters for the "Man of the People" exhausted their coarse vocabulary against "Judas" Wray, the would-be destroyer of Chelsea Hospital, the would-be imposer of the maidservant tax—"a bounty on bachelors," as Sheridan laughingly told the House of Commons. Those who upheld the "Men of Prerogative" not only jeered at Fox as a bankrupt knave and "the Jewish Messiah," but vented disgusting ribaldry on the Duchess's kisses and her sister's smiles. Mrs. Sheridan, however, escaped; her "sweetness," they owned, "was irresistible," and the worst that they could do was to call her

[1] Cf. "History of the Westminster Election" (1785), p. 476.

[2] Christie's in Pall Mall, Suffolk's under the Piazza, and Petterson's in King Street.

"the chairwoman of a petticoat-committee." As for Sheridan, they wondered why his creditors had not hung themselves, and indeed he now outran the constable in Bruton Street.[1] The plump Mrs. Hobart, on whom Fox turned his back, canvassed for Wray, but her charms did small execution, for Fox held all the queen-cards in his hand, and Covent Garden Market beheld its flowers eclipsed by the blaze of beauty. It was a ladies' battle: "All for Love," folks cried, "or The World Well Lost." While the hoarse mob roared, bandying jests and breaking bones round the Whig "Shakespeare Tavern" or the Tory "Wood's Hotel," they paused to stare at other fair ones than the quality. "Perdita" Robinson drove about beseeching the rabble to support Fox and Freedom—till her chariot was distrained upon and vanished. Mrs. Armstead (eleven years hence to be Fox's devoted wife) bowed from the windows of a ducal carriage, while roughs huzzaed, for all that she had been Perdita's lady's-maid.[2] The Prince of Wales himself descended into the arena, wearing the cockade of a fox's brush entwined with sprigs of laurel[3] (as contrasted with the Pittite wreath of oak-leaves), and a black coat-collar as against their gaudier blue ones. He escorted the Duchess and her lovely train, he unbent to all, an Olympian in Hades. His friends, Captain Morris the singer, Sam House the bruiser, and Bate-Dudley the fighting parson, diversified the proceedings; while the verses and speeches of Sheridan did much to quicken the fun of the fair. Sheridan himself was conspicuous, composing skits and nonsense-rhymes,[4]

[1] A year or so later Mrs. Tickell, while her sister stayed with the Crewes, told her that she noticed the grand preparations in Bruton Street for the coming season. The habits there were not regular, and the same correspondent remonstrates with Mrs. Sheridan for "going to bed at three, breakfasting at two, and taking no exercise."

[2] It is usually stated that this remarkable woman (for she became an example and a scholar) began as Mrs. Abington's waiting-woman, but the long and illustrated "Westminster Election," published in the next year, expressly says that she was Mrs. Robinson's. Cf. p. 233.

[3] The ladies, too, wore these emblems. The Duchess speaks in a letter of her sister going to the Opera to "sport her cockade."

[4] One of these runs—

arranging surprises, attending dinners at the "Crown and Anchor," where he proposed his favourite toast, "the Liberty of the Press." Had it been his own election, he could not have exerted himself more. Everywhere he was to the front, and in the thick of the *mêlée*. And the thick of it was violent. A youth shouting "Fox for ever" was knocked down by "a brute in the shape of a constable." An officer of the peace, Nicholas Casson, was knocked down by Fox's rioters and died of his injuries. Sheridan tried to restore order and stood bail for the gang. Mock funeral processions, mock shows of every description, marked the disturbance. And on May 14, when the poll was declared, there stood Sheridan beaming with his friends. Two members had to be returned. Hood headed the list with 6,694 votes, Fox came second, only 60 votes behind him, and Wray, last by 236. Shouts of triumph rent the air, and Fox was chaired in a semi-royal procession led by mounted heralds, surrounded with flags and emblems, and brought up by six-horsed coaches conveying their fair graces of Devonshire and Portland. A few days later, Carlton House outdid itself

"Mountmorres, Mountmorres,
Whom nobody for is,
And for whom we none of us care,
From Dublin you came;
It had been much the same
If your Lordship had stayed where you were."

That it is by Sheridan is shown by a number of similar ones among his own papers and a few in the Holland House MSS. "The House that George Built" is also probably his, for a year or so later Mrs. Tickell mentions a similar effusion, which appears in "The Rolliad," and, later still, Sheridan introduced one into a speech. It begins as follows:—

"This is the House that George built,
This is the malt, etc.

Lord Nugent [*i.e.*, Lord Clare, the Nestor of the House of Commons and a close connection of Temple]
This is the rat that ate the malt, etc.

Mr. Fox
This is the cat that killed the rat, etc."

And it goes on to Thurlow, "the bull with the crumpled horn," Pitt, "the maiden all forlorn," and Dundas, "the Scot by all forsworn." Moore, in his "Journal," misdescribes one on "Glenbervie" as part of "The Rolliad."

in a *fête champetre*, while Mrs. Crewe gave a gorgeous ball at Lower Grosvenor Street in the victor's honour.[1] All Fox's adherents, the Prince among them, appeared in blue and buff. At supper the Prince proposed "True blue and Mrs. Crewe," to which the fair hostess responded with "True blue and all of you." At that ball Sheridan must have figured with *éclat*, for not six months ago he had been doing the honours of Drury Lane to "Amoret," who had turned her chaise back from Crewe Hall, whither she was bound, on purpose to see "King Arthur." Mrs. Tickell assures her sister that "they mean nothing but pure innocence," and laughs at the episode, but Mrs. Sheridan wrote from Delapré Abbey, where she was staying with the Bouveries, "S—— is in town, and so is Mrs. Crewe; *I* am in the country, and so is *Mr. Crewe*; a very convenient arrangement, is it not?"[2]

But the Westminster pæans were short-lived. Wray demanded a scrutiny of the votes, and the whole issue was thus reopened. For months the conqueror lacked his seat, and had even to seek a temporary one in the Orkneys. This manœuvre disgraced the party that promoted it; it was malicious and, as the event proved, ill-judged and inopportune.[3] In the high bailiff's court paid witnesses gave unsworn evidence, whereas

[1] For most of these details cf. "The Westminster Election," pp. 187, 216, 227, 233, 258, 263—265, 267, 269, 287, 299, 304, 311, 312, 314, 325, 343, 346, 352, 365, 366, 367, 370—379. Sheridan's name is not given among the guests at the Prince's luncheon party. For the Crewe ball cf. (*inter alia*) Wraxall, Vol. III., p. 350.

[2] Sheridan MSS., Mrs. Sheridan to Mrs. Canning (November 23, 1783); Mrs. Tickell to Mrs. Sheridan (November, 1783). In one of these letters she writes, "I saw the veteran Amoret in all her charms. . . . She *was* at that play Monday night in Mr. Garrick's box. Last night she was in Dr. Ford's with Mr. Lane and two gentlemen. They did not come till the play was near over, and indeed had been at the box some time before I had any idea who they were, nor, I believe, should I ever have found them out if *S—— had not told me;* but the best of the joke was that even then I took Mr. Lane for her companion and was quite shocked at the amazing alteration in her. S—— joined with me most heartily." At this time Sheridan, she writes, was "full of business."

[3] In the debates on it during February, 1785, Pitt's majority sank to nine.

had the proceedings been referred to a Committee of the House, they would have been punishable for perjury. The high bailiff, too, professed qualms of conscience as to the figures of his return, and yet next year the inquiry was transferred to another officer. This is how Sheridan handled the matter in the council of the nation, and his speech was honoured by a reply from Pitt, though Windham, lately returned for Norwich, made his first great speech on this occasion :—

" Last year the whole of the question relative to the scrutiny depended on the high bailiff's conscience, which, it was contended, he ought to have time to satisfy ; whereas this year it was evident that he had no conscience, at least none in his own keeping, for he had delivered it over to his assessor, as to a jury. This is the first time I have ever heard of a man's conscience being satisfied through the sensations of another. I have always heretofore thought that the conscience saw with its own eyes, and was affected by its own organs : that conscience was the only thing one could not hear by proxy ; no letter of attorney would be of use to it. . . . A noble lord had said early in the debate that it was a false idea that our Constitution was injured by the absence of two or more members, but the fact was, the Constitution required that no members should be illegally restrained from attending their duty. This doctrine, I am persuaded, is ill-founded. In case of death, an insurmountable restraint but certainly not a legal one, what sort of language did the Speaker's warrant hold? It stated the extreme necessity that the House of popular representation should be full and complete, when the business of the King and his people, Church and State, are to be agitated." Sheridan then quoted statutes, criticised more arguments, and denounced the sheriff's court. But he took a broader line than a special pleader's. Appealing to Pitt, not as a minister but as a friend to parliamentary reform, nothing, he said, had given him greater pleasure than the minister's early championship of that cause. He had never doubted its sincerity, and he assured him of his entire confidence in this respect, " a gift which the right honourable gentleman might hold cheap " ; but he must

permit him to tell him that the honest confidence of one sincere and anxious friend of reform, though as humble and insignificant an individual as himself, was worth all the rotten support of a whole herd of flatterers and followers, attached only by their present interests, and ready to change with the first change of circumstances." How did the virtual disenfranchisement of Westminster accord with Pitt's talk of purifying the general representation? How would the right honourable gentleman have liked, as he drove through the streets of that disfranchised city, to hear the people cry out, "There goes the minister who in his liberality is this day to give one hundred additional members to counties, and denies this city its legal and constitutional privilege of two representatives"? He repudiated party feeling. As a party man, he should be ready to exclaim "Long live the scrutiny," for every Whig must wish the scrutiny to proceed. If the House absurdly and unjustly refused to order an immediate return of the writ, the right honourable gentleman would find that the scrutiny would entangle him in every step he took; it would be perpetually in his way and would sooner or later throw him down. He would have to recant, though to him recantation was no novelty. Only last year he had sacrificed the coal tax, and declared that he surrendered to clamour what he denied to reason. He pressed Pitt once more "to accompany him in leading the House out of its error." "Let them all tread back the mistaken road they had taken; and if the right honourable gentleman would put out his power as a minister, and lend them the strength of his arguments as a man, he would answer for it that they would honourably meet him." Sheridan's appeal only failed through a majority of thirty-nine.[1] Justice was on his side, and on March 31, 1785, Fox's return for Westminster was maintained against Corbett, the high bailiff.[2]

[1] Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 99—106, February 9, 1785. On February 18 and 21 and on March 9 Sheridan tackled the subject again. He had dealt before with the subject on June 8, 1784.

[2] The subsequent motion "to expunge all the past proceedings" was only lost on March 9 because it would have been disastrous to Pitt's administration.

But though Sheridan rightly based his censure of the scrutiny on political principle, his reference to Pitt and parliamentary reform was ironical. In a few months Pitt was to bring forward his last proposal for that cause, which Sheridan supported by a silent vote; and yet only a few months back, when Alderman Sawbridge, Puritan and Republican, had moved for a Committee of inquiry into the present state of representation, Pitt's answer had been that such demands were now "unseasonable," while his ally, Lord Mulgrave, had actually moved the previous question. Sheridan distinguished himself in this debate, and he said that Pitt, notwithstanding his private persuasion as to the unripeness of the moment, was a sincere friend to "a sober and temperate parliamentary reform." He begged Mulgrave, therefore, to withdraw his motion, as otherwise the minister would be exposed to a suspicion of connivance, especially as Pitt himself had owned that this device of the previous question cast a slur on the very cause.[1] That was a memorable night. Sir Richard Hill—the "scriptural Killigrew"—sided with Pitt and profited by the occasion to reopen the stale charges against North and the American War. His venom was patent. As the "Rolliad" sang of him:—

> "Brother of Rowland, or if yet more dear
> Sounds thy new title, cousin of a peer,
> Scholar of various learning, good or evil,
> Alike what God inspired, or what the devil."

Lord North rejoined by a vigorous self-vindication, and he dared the present minister to impeach him. Pitt had threatened impeachment with the noisiest of them before the Rockingham administration, yet now he suffered a satellite to argue as if that were proved which he had not the courage to test.

Henceforward in Parliament the American War, the mother of all the succeeding movements, was dead, though its influence lingered. India, Ireland, and afterwards France, took its place as storm-centres. And in this year of 1784 the Indian question reappeared in Pitt's India Bill, at first rejected, ultimately

[1] Speeches, Vol. I., p. 74, June 16, 1784.

carried in triumph—a Bill due mainly to his lieutenant, Dundas, but botched and altered as it came into use, and, even in 1788, requiring explanatory clauses. It remained effectual, however, by its creation of a Board amenable to Parliament and tied down to matters of revenue, while it saved the existence of the charter and the honour of the Crown. None, however, in the future rued its restrictions more than did the East India Company itself, but this was its best defence, and it proved a working arrangement that practically lasted till Indian administration was transferred from the Corporation to the State. Fox thundered against it. In his eyes its commercial limitations were illusory, while the proposed right of appeal was merely one from an irreversible junto. Burke consigned it to "the abhorrence of Europe and Asia," and he poured out all the vials of his wrath on the Governor-General of Bengal. Not long afterwards he moved for papers relative to the Princesses of Oude, but his many motions were thrown out without a division, though not without fierce invectives against Pitt as a compounder of felony. Sheridan, who spoke often on details, excelled himself in a speech upon some of the amendments. Twenty-one new clauses had been added, known by all the letters of the alphabet except "X, Y, *Z*." It was to be hoped, therefore, that someone would fill up the gap and make a complete horn-book for the ministry. The old clauses, in black letter at the end of each column, stood in mourning for the folly of their parents. Their accuracy had been praised, but what place had accuracy when twenty-one new clauses had been added, and the rest transformed in committee? He derided the procedure. There was the new "Court of Judicature," the court which Fox's criticism had exposed. Its probable object was to employ Mr. Dundas and a few friends who had confessed that their places were sinecures, and its sole principle was that of the mother who gives her children playthings to keep them out of mischief. If this were true, far be it from him to cavil, or doubt but that an integrity tried at Westminster would here ensure the strictest justice. Another clause concerned a secret Council of three directors, and it was fair game for

Sheridan. The Crown and the Company were vying to overreach each other. The pretended independence of this institution was only a sop for a Corporation furious that orders could be sent to India without its consent. But the Council, be it marked, was sworn never to divulge its proceedings. Its three members, therefore, might attend their Court as directors, hear regulations absolutely opposed to their own knowledge, and yet be debarred by their oaths from more than a wink or a nod or (and here "The Critic" is in sight), a grave shake of the head, to intimate that they knew something which they dared not disclose. Still a fresh clause compelled the Company to transmit all papers to the Secretary of State and to the Council for approval; and one more again enabled these to refer any changes for reconsideration. If redress were denied, the point at issue could be then relegated to the King, though the King was in fact the same tribunal to which they had twice appealed before. And next he reverted to the new Court of Judicature, which, he said, deprived British subjects of their trial by jury, so that the very minister who professed to preserve the charter of a dishonest Company, subverted the foundation-stone on which Magna Charta rested. Pitt was paving a direct road towards establishing arbitrary power in Great Britain, and this was the meaning of "modern popularity." Pitt had urged that the Bill was acceptable to India. If it was really agreeable to delinquents, it must be a bad Bill. But Sheridan denied that it was acceptable, for a petition had arrived from six hundred and forty-eight of the principal residents in Bengal, beseeching the House not to violate the Constitution. He threw all the blame on the "Indian phalanx," who were now the minister's virtual patrons. The Swiss Guards of peculation had openly vowed to overthrow the last ministry, and that precedent should teach this present one the value of their friendship. These Eastern lords had gone so far as to declare that any point could be carried by money. Sheridan demanded the recommittal of the Bill, and he relied on Pitt's candour to divest it of its slovenly dress, and to "conform it to the principles of

common sense if he would not conform it to the principles of common justice."[1] His hit at the "Eastern lords" found happy expression in "The Rolliad," which glances at the benches where

> "Exalted sit
> The pillars of prerogative and *Pitt;*
> Delights of Asia, ornaments of man,
> Thy Sovereign's sovereigns, happy Hindostan!"

The young orator had now emerged, but for the remainder of this year he restrained his energies, confining his remarks chiefly to matters of business—ways and means, the Civil List, smuggling, the coal tax, the evasion of Post Office Acts, the preservation of game, the petition from Navy bill holders, and so forth. After the disposal of the Westminster scrutiny in the March of the next year, Pitt stood a ruler undisputed and unapproached. And yet he had a double opposition to encounter: the formidable one of the Foxites, and the remnant of Shelburne, headed by the now blind Barré, but rid of Rigby, Dundas's friend yet a deserter to the Coalitionists. With the one exception of India, which still simmered in the political cauldron, the sole great issues that intervened during the dead levels before the French upheaval were commercial: Irish commerce and the commercial treaty with France. Pitt's aims were to maintain peace and to repair the ravages of war; and in these efforts he was ably seconded by an adviser who personified the Scot as Sheridan and Burke did the Irishman. His new-fledged supremacy, backed by Jenkinson in the palace, William Grenville in the Lower House and the Duke of Richmond in the Upper, had been steadied by the long-sighted shrewdness of Dundas, who would have been doomed to perennial opposition had he not tacked and turned with every breeze. But Dundas also owned qualities rarely combined in the same person. He was at once accommodating and resolute—even dogged in his unflinching perseverance. Though instinctively a placeman and a soldier of fortune, he appeared as though he had never deviated from the

[1] Speech of July 6, 1784, Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 86—92.

straight road which he had at last found and pursued. To a passion for pleasure he joined a devotion to business and a mastery over detail—which, however, never impaired a breadth of outlook seldom associated with it. Dundas was a statesman as well as a politician, and Pitt leaned on his loyalty. For the northerner could brace Pitt's natural timidity, his resource could brighten the darkest moment, and his courage, contrive victory out of the elements of defeat. Even thus early his hold on the young minister was manifest. As "The Rolliad" put it, Pitt was now

> "Too proud from pilfered greatness to descend,
> Too humble not to call Dundas his friend."

Dundas was more than a friend. Pitt loved him, and to his influence may be ascribed most of the developments in store. Nor, often and keenly as Sheridan assailed him, were they ever hostile in private life.

But both he and Sheridan already realised that the days of the Coalitionists were past. Pitt had consolidated the situation, his ground was assured, and the race was no longer to the swift. Backed by the Northumberlands and Lonsdales, cheered by the Crown and the country, his long reign was in sight. Had Sheridan, like so many of his colleagues hereafter, been ready to reinforce Pitt, Dundas would have welcomed him. But that was never his ply. Sheridan would not forsake Fox, and steep as looked the uphill road that lay before them, he was ready to climb it cheerily. Who could tell whether Pitt might not be battered down at last? The King might die, and then the Prince would come to his own. Impecunious, light-hearted, young and rebellious, they would struggle forwards. There was pleasure in the pain, and many a solace in the cups which they emptied nightly to the promise of better fortune.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE UPHILL ROAD

### POLITICS, "THE ROLLIAD," SOCIETY, AND THE FITZHERBERT INCIDENT

(March, 1785—May, 1787)

"... What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
* * * *
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else not to be overcome?"

MILTON.

THERE is no democrat in the world like an aristocrat who plays with democracy, and the Opposition leaders against Pitt were certainly the spoiled favourites of great houses. Political annals afford small parallel to their position in this respect and at this moment. Three palaces lay open to them: Devonshire House, the rallying-point of wit and beauty, that from its vantage-ground seemed to look down on the Queen's House beyond the parks, where George's frugal wife sat machinating against it; Burlington House (also Cavendish property), whose Italian galleries received the Whig leaders convened in frequent council by the Duke of Portland; and Carlton House, the Prince's plaything, whose growing magnificence troubled his father and was soon to trouble the realm—Carlton House, that now assembled all of the wittiest and fairest in London, for its owner was still the most graceful prince of his day, nor had he yet become one of Circe's swine. All these houses welcomed Sheridan, while the Duncannons' mansion in Cavendish Square, and their *villeggiatura* at Roehampton enlarged the list. For Henrietta Frances, later Lady Bessborough, was now nearly as fascinating, and quite as much fascinated by Sheridan, as her sister Georgiana, and the friend of their hearts, the enigmatical Lady Elizabeth Foster. Caressed by these,

the Whig sybarites had no cause to complain of the exciting tasks that broke their pleasures. Socially, Sheridan had arrived. His beautiful wife moved graciously amid the temptations of an enchanted circle. Princes flattered her, but as yet she held her own, though the loose standards of a society, the pleasant vices of which assumed a gloss of virtue, already began to steal upon her receptive temperament. From such allurements she took refuge in the quiet hours with her "sister Christian" at the Putney cottage. She could not forget the bygone days of servitude and trial. Still less could she forget the precariousness of all this outward splendour. Bailiffs were no strangers to Bruton Street, and at times she longed for a humbler home, or even for some safe retreat in the country. But Sheridan's pride precluded these efforts. In vain she begged him not to hide their hampered circumstances from the grandees who fêted them and whom they fêted. His ambition urged him on, and she would never stand in his way. Her Dick and she were "struggling against the stream," and proud of him, she faced the future, nor envied the fortunate, even when she sat down to lose her savings at their card-tables. How strange it seemed that he, the actor's son, the Bath ne'er-do-weel, should now be the great "parliament-man" and prince's confidant; that names once heard by her with awe should now be daily presences! She felt sure that for her Dick "nothing was impossible." He was not ashamed of Drury Lane, and even there, with actors mutinying and finance disordered, he had only to appear, and oil was cast upon the troubled waters. And their little Tom would be as wonderful; the boy of ten was the prodigy of his private school at Salt Hill, and universally petted and admired. In time all obstacles would melt away, and their struggles would be rewarded. "Against the stream." Gaily let them embark, "youth on the prow and pleasure at the helm."[1] Nor at this moment did she fail to play the peacemaker between her husband and his still

[1] These feelings of Mrs. Sheridan are taken from many of her MS. letters and her sister's.

offended father, now smarting from the fresh grievance of being re-denied a theatre-management which Mrs. Siddons had promised, and growing testier from recurrent rheumatism. Elizabeth Sheridan recounts how warmly her sister-in-law pleaded her brother's cause when she called with Mrs. Tickell, but was refused an interview. The old man remained obdurate. He had vowed never to see her or him again. But he soon thawed towards Mrs. Sheridan, and eventually towards his son. She, Dick, and their little Tom, dined with him during the next year. Yet even so, and almost up to his death, the reconciliation was not entire, and this Sheridan felt acutely. But the father did own that the breach was partly his fault. "He acknowledges," wrote Elizabeth Sheridan to her sister, "his neglect of him, and that even in the theatrical business which so severely hurt him, he did not wonder at his conduct when he reflected that, though it was done with a view to serve him and the other patentees, yet still he so thwarted Dick's schemes and wishes that he was not surprised he opposed him. When I compare this with the last year's violence and execrations, . . . I can only wonder at the effects of passion, which could so far blind a man of my father's understanding and morality to the destruction of his own peace and that of his friends."[1] Yet old Sheridan lived to be proud of his son and happy with him.

If there was one cause which Sheridan had at heart, it was Ireland. It has been pointed out how much his sister dwelt on the fact that he espoused it spontaneously, regardless of party and quite on his own initiative. More than this, his calculating brother, whom Pitt's *régime* had not dislodged from his official berth, by no means relished Sheridan's Irish ardour.[2] And now an opportunity for

[1] LeFanu MSS. Elizabeth and her father, now in town, were constantly with the Angelos. Young Harry Angelo had just married his beautiful north-country wife. The intractable old Sheridan hoped to have returned to office at Drury Lane, but after Younger had retired, King returned as sub-manager. Charles Sheridan, in his turn, was soon to be in his father's black books.

[2] Elizabeth Sheridan writes to her sister in 1785, "I wonder at Charles's

exhibiting his zeal arose. Ireland had her independent parliament, but English tariffs still cramped her commerce. Distress culminated in riots, and Pitt set himself to create fair trade for Ireland. This was not one of his unmixed causes, but an expedient to meet an exigency. Doubtless his intentions were good—and, indeed, he followed Lord North's example [1]—but the manner of their execution laid itself open to the charge of double-dealing. Jenkinson prompted him behind the scenes. His eleven original "Propositions" were opened in Ireland before they were laid on the table of the English House of Commons, and no fewer than sixteen others were foisted on the measure while it proceeded. The "fourth" proposition, which bound Ireland by the British Navigation Acts, was an after-thought, sprung as a surprise and fettering Ireland's fresh-fledged independence; [2] while by others again he tried to use his benefits as a lever for exacting naval and military support in times of peace. His bounty to Ireland was far from the disinterested benevolence that some histories have belauded. And directly the scheme took shape, it provoked an outcry from the English manufacturers (among whom Wedgwood was prominent) as stormy as that in Ireland. Though blindly followed by a selfish majority, he was publicly lowered by conduct reflecting the Court influence necessary to secure him. Over and over again he listened to fierce diatribes in silence, and not long afterwards it was Lord Mansfield who exclaimed, "He is not a great minister: he is

impudence in going to tell you of his expectations from Government. He has already more than he deserves, and how dare he talk of soliciting for himself more, while his debts to us remain unpaid?" LeFanu MSS. In a long letter to Sheridan, however, his brother had pressed the necessity for "a fair, liberal and equal commercial arrangement." Sheridan MSS.

[1] In 1779 North had proposed to free the Irish woollen trade.

[2] By the original Act, 12 Car. II., sec. 10, all commodities could be imported into Ireland on the same terms as into England, but by an Act three years later the exportation of goods to the plantations was forbidden, and later still exports from the plantations to Ireland were also prohibited. Eden mentions these unjust restrictions in his "Letter on the Representation of Ireland respecting a Free Trade" (1782).

a great young minister." His inexperience betrayed him, while his opportunism ended in displeasing both remonstrant Ireland and the England that cherished her birthright of trade-monopoly. Ireland, in Sheridan's burning words, was asked "to contend for the distinction of fastening her own shackles." "Newly escaped," he urged, "from harsh trammels and severe discipline," she was now "treated like a high-mettled horse, hard to catch; and the Irish Secretary is to return to the field soothing and coaxing him with a sieve of provender in one hand, but with a bridle in the other, ready to slip over his head while he is snuffing at the food." If the navigation laws were to be fastened on the Irish legislature, the foundation of Grattan's Parliament would be sapped, and Ireland's independence would become a sham. Sheridan's main speech was the first of his big wrestling matches with Pitt; it was reprinted as a pamphlet in Dublin,[1] and it voiced Irish resistance so effectively that Pitt's "enlightened" project went under.

Pitt opened his scheme on May 12, 1785, before a crowded House in a memorable discussion which lasted till past eight in the morning. Fox denounced Jenkinson as the invisible mainspring of the machine, nor did Jenkinson reply to the charge, under which he again sat silent a week later.[2] Eden, Fox's Jenkinson in commercial concerns, but next year, one of "Robinson's rats," a deserter to Pitt, did his utmost, but a majority of 126 attested the leader's dominance. On May 19 the discussion was renewed and the acrimony heightened. Burke let loose his full fury. "I envy not," he said, "the statue its pedestal, nor the pedestal its statue"; Pitt and his Jenkinson

[1] "The Legislative Independence of Ireland vindicated in a Speech of Mr. Sheridan's on the Irish Propositions in the British House of Commons on Monday, the 30th of May, 1785, also an authentic copy of the Twenty Resolutions on the Irish Commercial Intercourse, being taken from the votes of the English House of Commons. Dublin, printed by P. Cooney at the Hibernian Printing Office, Essex Street, 1785." "Price a British sixpence."

[2] In March, 1783, he had admitted his secret influence (cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 53), but he had denied it vehemently in January, 1784, and was again to do so in June, 1786 (cf. Wraxall, Vol. IV., pp. 129, 350).

were well suited. Fox exclaimed, "*My* only pedestal is the British Constitution," and indeed the "Constitution" had often to suffer as the stalking-horse for Fox's feelings. Dundas took shrewd advantage of these openings. "I conceive," he said of Burke, "that he alludes to the pedestal on which the late Secretary of State attempted to place himself, and to bury under it the Constitution of his country." The reference to the Prince of Wales could not be mistaken. All was personality and recrimination, and to these Pitt added by dragging in the King and pointing to "a set of men . . . who, having stormed the Cabinet and distributed among themselves the several departments of Government," had formed "a regular system for degrading their royal master to a cipher in the State." The "Rolliad" thus laughed at the minister and the mysterious Jenkinson :—

> "Lo! hand in hand advance th' enamoured pair,
> This, Chatham's son, and that, the drudge of Bute,
> Proud of their mutual love,
> Like Nisus and Euryalus they move—
> To glory's steepest heights together tend,
> Each careless of himself, each anxious for his friend.
> Hail! associate politicians!
> Hail! sublime arithmeticians!
> Hail! vast, exhaustless source of Irish *propositions!*"

Pitt and Jenkinson, Fox and the Coalition, the King and the Prince: what had these to do with the trade of Ireland? On May 30 Sheridan, who had long kept silence, recalled the House to the real issues. He made a telling onslaught on those clauses which in effect compelled naval and military succour. Nothing was left to generosity: it was a mean bargain. The tariffs of the two countries were to be conformed, but by this arrangement many duties which were now temporary in Ireland, would be rendered perpetual, and might be used to support a standing army. In such a case the need for assembling the parliaments of either country as frequently as the safety of the Constitution demanded would vanish. "It might be answered that Parliament must be assembled in order to bring in the Bills and take the regular estimates before

them. But he had experience to bear him out, for notwithstanding a resolution of the last Parliament constituted it a high crime and misdemeanour for any person to expend any sum of the public money, except such as had been already appropriated, the right honourable gentleman at the head of the Treasury, in defiance of that resolution, was bold enough to employ very large sums to such purposes as he thought proper." Having thrown down the gauntlet against the Bill's finance, he turned to its general tenor. Pitt had varied his first offer to Ireland and the spirit of his proposals. "The Irish nation would spurn the bondage which their degenerate representatives had no authority to engage they should submit to." Ireland was called on to yield all legislative authority in matters of trade and navigation. England would resume "the right of external legislation so lately exercised, but so solemnly renounced by Great Britain." If she departed a hair's breadth from her own stipulations, resistance would be warranted, and resistance would mean coercion. If she did not, Ireland would only register English decrees. No free will would be left "upon any of those subjects of legislation in which she now stipulated to follow the edicts of Great Britain. And it was a miserable sophistry to contend that her being permitted the ceremony of placing those laws upon her own statute book was an argument that it was not the British but the Irish statute which bound the people of Ireland. . . . Where fetters were to be worn, it were wretched ambition to contend for the distinction of fastening our own shackles." If the English Parliament had begun by approaching Ireland and frankly treating for the sacrifice of rights deemed the safeguard of her commerce and her Constitution, that would have been open. "Instead of this, all had been delusion, trick and fallacy: *a new scheme of commercial arrangement is proposed to the Irish as a boon, and the surrender of their constitution is tacked on to it as a mercantile regulation.*" And then he warmly defended Fox, who had been reproached for the free gift of Grattan's Parliament. "Was there a man in that House who could stand up and say that conditions ought to have been made with Ireland annexed to

this concession, if concession it could be called? Was there a man who stated this to be his opinion at the time?" Fox had "disdained the injustice of bargaining on such a subject; nor would Ireland have listened to him if he had attempted it. She had never applied to purchase a constitution, and if a tribute or contribution had been demanded in return for that grant of liberty, the patriotic spirits who were then leading the oppressed people of an insulted country towards the attainment of just rights, would have pointed to other modes of acquiring them, would have called to them, in the words of Camillus, *arma aptare, atque ferro, non auro, patriam et libertatem recuperare*": to buckle on their armour, and recover freedom and country by iron, not gold. No fresh home circumstances warranted the new arrangement. "No material principle, upon which the two countries were to remain connected, had been violated." The only wonder was that those principles had been so steadily maintained under a system whereby "every three months wafted over a new lord-lieutenant." Dublin riots, forsooth, had been urged as a pretence for these changes. "Had the Irish clamoured for the present settlement, or any one article contained in it? Had they requested to be tied for ever to British monopoly in the West Indies . . . ? Had they complained that fortune had offered them American trade without condition and without restraint? Had they protested apprehensions that the rich commerce of the East would speedily be theirs unless effectual measures were taken to preclude it? Had they regretted that they were burdened with a surplus of hereditary revenue? Had they murmured that they were tired of legislative independence, or entreated to be relieved of it?" It had been suggested that Ireland ought to relinquish her right because, even at the cost of her own interest, she might one day so act as to embarrass imperial trade and navigation. Had Ireland herself then nothing to fear "from party, from mercantile avarice, or from blind and narrow policy? . . . In truth, there is not a single argument which can be used as an inducement to Great Britain to attempt to resume this power, which does not equally apply as

a motive to Ireland not to part with it; with this difference only, that fact and experience will justify the result of the one, but have afforded no pretence for the requisition from the other." Sheridan then showed in detail how much Britain might damage Irish commerce under the working of this fourth proposition, round which the controversy raged; and he minutely examined the whole mercantile situation. He demonstrated that, under these fair pretexts, Ireland's colonial commerce was to be stopped: she was "to consent that an immovable boom should be placed from the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan." And what requital would she gain for sacrifices like these? The British market! On what terms, then, was it to be opened to her? He took the arguments of those who had proposed "this boon." By their own showing the terms were such as must "effectually prevent Ireland from ever profiting in the smallest degree by the concession." It was "neither more nor less than a direct fraud, cheat, and robbery; stripping Ireland of all the commercial advantages she had obtained, as well as of the Constitution which secured them to her, and giving nothing in return but a right to render herself odious in this country by an attempt at rivalship which could not be profitable to herself, though it might be mischievous to Great Britain." At first she might gain some advantage, but only by a lax execution of her revenue laws, "by stealing her own manufactures into this country, by passing those of foreign countries for her own, by obtaining a transfer of capital and enticing over artists and workmen; by smuggling and evading, defrauding, conniving, deceiving. So far from encouraging a struggle for the British market, he would warn Ireland against it as her ruin, and seek rather to stimulate the home consumption of her own products and a "successful intercourse with every foreign port." Sheridan closed this fine speech by recurring to the alterations of the measure from the time when it had been first offered by the Irish Parliament, and rejected by Ireland with scorn. If adopted now, "a deep wound would be given to the confidence of Ireland in Great Britain, the decisive blow would be struck,

and affection and good faith between the two countries be banished for ever."

Pitt replied, twitting him with inconsistency, and Sheridan sprang to his feet once more. He had been reproached with a "curious charge and curiously supported." Pitt's own conduct accounted for the seeming contradictions. Every day had brought forth new opinions. The tone had been changed and the ground shifted at every meeting of the Committee. Was it for Pitt to reprobate a double game, Pitt, who through the whole of this business had not maintained one straightforward step? "It was impossible to adapt the mind to the perpetual changes. One voice in Ireland, another in England; a mock investigation pursued by the Privy Council, after the King had been thanked for adopting the measure; the manufacturers in both countries assured that all their apprehensions were due to accident or their own dulness. The accusation against him had been loose. For his part, he defied the right honourable gentleman to tax him with any one real inconsistency upon the subject. He was the mouthpiece of no party, nor was he the tool of any. He had as strong party feelings as any man; but he had those feelings because those to whom he was attached neither expected from him servility of judgment nor pliancy of principle." The minister knew too well in his own case what it was to be the mere channel for other people's sentiments. And then Sheridan recapitulated his conduct step by step. At the outset (when petitions poured in from British manufacturers and Fox in opposing the Bill had taken up their standpoint), he had publicly stated his regret at differing from those with whom he usually acted. When Pitt had added sixteen propositions more, he had expressly declared, in proposing an amendment, that this very fourth resolution now under debate "struck him as an absolute resumption of external legislation over Ireland." The right honourable gentleman in amending the same resolution had quoted "Mr. Sheridan's misconception" as a reason, and Mr. Sheridan had answered that the amendment removed no part of his dislike. Since then, he had spoken and divided against this resolution in

committee. Had he been "inflammatory," as Pitt alleged? Respecting other particulars of the arrangement, he had even voted with the minister, and against Fox and North. He had suggested amendments, too, which had been adopted, and he had helped to smooth the sensitiveness of Ireland. He left the House to judge whether anything in his conduct could be twisted so as to make him out either an incendiary or an opportunist. "But his opinion upon the whole of the plan, as it was completed, he had delivered that day, and that opinion he would maintain."[1]

Sheridan had been well informed by Stratford Canning, now in Ireland, his cousin Richard Sheridan, and other friends. Canning told him how stoutly he was defended in the Irish Parliament. The speech struck home and circulated broadcast. Canning wrote to him, "We hear astonishing accounts of your greatness. Paddy will, I suppose, some *beau jour* be voting you another £50,000," as he had done to Grattan three years earlier. Mrs. Sheridan (then at Crewe Hall) wrote to Canning's wife—whose eldest boy was Sheridan's godson—"They tell me Sheridan has made the best speech on the Irish business . . . that ever was heard—I hear nothing but his praises, which (between you and I) I have great pleasure in, 'tho' he is my Husband.'"[2] When Pitt's proposals suddenly collapsed next August in the Irish Parliament, Corry, an eye-witness of the scene, raised his pæan. "I wish you joy a thousand times," he wrote to Sheridan, "we have the effects of a complete victory." Sheridan was regarded as the Bill's destroyer in the House of Commons.

But before that moment, he returned to his charge at the

[1] Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 130—149.

[2] Sheridan MSS., which also contain the Irish correspondence above mentioned. Mrs. Sheridan wrote again to Alicia LeFanu, "Perhaps I might check the effusion of my vanity on this subject, but you, I know, can be partial enough to his abilities to believe I do not flatter him when I assure you he stands second to none but Charles Fox in the House of Commons, in the opinion of all Parties." Sheridan's speech was published at Dublin in pamphlet form; cf. the Bibliography in the Appendix to this volume.

close of July in a philippic absent from the published collection of his speeches, but summarised by Wraxall.[1] Fortunately, a long draft of this oration survives among Sheridan's papers, and we may be allowed to dwell a little longer on these Irish utterances. They sprang from his heart and were no briefs for a party, and moreover, they show him a grown-up orator and a really formidable opponent. The well-knit reasoning is relieved by spurts of sarcasm. The speech is long, but a few citations will serve for many, while its purport suggests that perhaps Pitt was not wholly mistaken on the earlier occasion when he taxed Sheridan with the "inflammatory" proceedings which Sheridan then disclaimed. On July 25, Pitt moved a long address to the Crown, extolling the commercial resolutions adopted by the House. It was not a panegyric, urged Sheridan, but a manifesto, "an impudent libel on the British and Irish Parliaments, and a libel on the Throne." So far Wraxall has informed us; for the rest we are indebted to his own rough draft. The plan which started with such fair promises, it runs, was now execrated in Ireland with a detestation, increasing daily. To stamp such "clamour" as "artificial" would be absurd and childish. "To argue gravely that the Irish if they had been left to themselves would never have discovered the trick and point of this business, is an argument only to be expected from the framers of these propositions, who must indeed have proceeded on a conviction that there was neither sense nor spirit in Ireland, and that they might insult their understanding and assault their rights with impunity. . . . I'll grant him everything, he says, if he has a mind—that pains have been taken from hence to induce the Parliament and people of Ireland to reject these propositions. *I avow for one that I have done all I could. I only reproach myself that I have not written a commentary to show—and I would have my name to it—that they are calculated to enslave Ireland.*" Who, he proceeds ironically, would blame the sincere upholder of such convictions

[1] Cf. Wraxall, Vol. IV., p. 163. Sheridan's long MS. draft is easily identifiable with Wraxall's *resumé*.

with having done amiss? "The honourable gentleman did not believe that the Opposition would have attempted to asperse his plans out of this House, or endeavoured to raise an alarm. The meekness and simplicity of his nature did not lead him to believe that any Opposition could be capable of such a proceeding. He has no recollection that when he found an India Bill introduced . . . to every part of which he objected, he thought it necessary to sound an alarm, as he called it, to tell the country that there was a faction who had seized the Government. . . . But I will take the liberty of telling him that it was not the hate of Opposition men, nor his rash and blundering manner . . . , not the folly of the measure nor the injustice of many parts of this scheme, that have fired the general discontent in Ireland. But it has been the tricks, the hypocrisy, with which this scheme has been brought forward, which have raised the flame. Where you are treating with a generous and unsuspecting friend, an attempt to overreach and obtain everything by a point, by a piece of management, will always provoke a greater degree of revenge and resentment than even if you had tried to obtain it by direct menaces and oppression. This is what has ruined the honourable gentleman's plan and his character too in that country. He never can get over this plain fact, that he sent them over the plan as a complete system . . . , that he suffered Majesty in person to act a part in this fallacy—to receive an address and answer it, and that during the whole of this time he, however, kept concealed and behind the veil the conditions on which the treaty [rested]. . . . I say he never can get over this unless he dares to confess that this essence of the plan was in fact an afterthought and not in contemplation. . . . But I cannot admit even this miserable excuse—if I could think it his plan I might. . . . I must decide that it was an act of deliberate deceit."[1]

[1] The pamphleteers came to Pitt's aid, and in particular "A Member of the Whig Club" published an ironical "Defence of Opposition" (1785) dedicated to Fox and confuting him and his colleagues by their own former utterances. This pamphlet was sold to the author as by Sheridan, which it is clearly not, and it is mentioned here to prevent any further mistakes in the matter.

Thus Sheridan, as Cato. The event proved him right, and his sentiments were echoed in the House of Lords, where Lord Sackville, a keen anti-Coalitionist, denounced Pitt's Irish propositions with his dying breath, while Lord Lansdowne obliquely scathed them in a speech venomous against Pitt. Pitt, observed a contemporary, was a very discreet man and was right nine times out of ten where Fox was wrong, but that once where Fox was right was worth all the other times put together. The present instance is one in point. Throughout this critical debate Pitt himself spoke with hesitating air and faltering accents. His thoughts were as uncertain, for with Pitt, eloquence promoted thought, and it was Sheridan who once said of him, "His is a brain that never works but when his tongue is set going, like some machines that are set in motion by a pendulum."[1]

Sheridan spoke often during this year of 1785. He spoke on the servant-maid tax, which Courtenay wittily termed "*not* an Irish proposition." Although no speech by Sheridan is recorded on Pitt's great institution of the Sinking Fund (which, however, was afterwards to prove illusory in detail), he spoke several times on general taxation, exposing some of Pitt's financial fallacies as if he had passed his life in business. But indeed, save Dundas, Jenkinson and Eden, few of the big-wigs knew even the elements of finance. Fox expressly disclaimed any such knowledge, and it has been well said by Mr. Herbert Paul that finance was treated by the Foxites as if it had been an invention of Pitt's. Still, Sheridan did go very carefully into figures, of which henceforward he showed a considerable grasp, the more surprising to such as knew how involved were his own affairs. Nor was this part of financial critic an onerous one to play, for Pitt's taxes were naturally unpopular. In this very year, his window tax, which touched all, accompanied though it was with a reduction in the tea duties which touched but few, evoked a *brochure* entitled "Dearer Daylight and Cheaper Tea." Sheridan further spoke on a motion by Pitt

[1] Cf. "Early Life of Samuel Rogers," p. 307.

for an inquiry into some of the public office accounts—an inquiry which, had Fox been in power, would have been vigorously upheld. And in this matter the comedian took a characteristic course. Fox thundered against the inquisition as "unconstitutional." Burke branded it as "a direct violation of Magna Charta"; Sheridan, recoiling from extremes, contented himself with calling it "unnecessary."[1]

But his main brush with the enemy in this domain was his intervention in a debate of April 20 on the partial repeal of recent excise duties on cotton-stuffs. He did not rise to oppose the repeal, which he wished to be entire, but to defend the Manchester manufacturers whom Pitt had aspersed as manufacturers of clamour. Sheridan, sympathetic with the agitation, had spent the summer in Lancashire. He was now charged with inflaming it, and the man to threaten him with Temple Bar for spreading seditious pamphlets, was a stupid, sturdy, West-country squire named Rolle—"the Squire Western" of "The Rolliad"[2]—who won a peerage by sticking doggedly to every point that he raised against the Opposition, and ended by gracing the Coronation of Queen Victoria. Sheridan "on his honour" assured Rolle that he had neither written nor circulated the handbills. Rolle refused to believe him. Sheridan retorted that Rolle talked at random, but that if he repeated the accusation it should be met "both here and elsewhere" "very plainly and coarsely." The real incentive to the charge was literature "less prosaic but more popular."[3] He alluded to "The Rolliad," the best political satire in the language, and a general laugh greeted the allusion.

"The Rolliad" made its first appearance earlier in the year, and continued its developments for four years longer. It ran to twenty-two editions, which only ceased after the first decade of

[1] Debates of February 17 and March 8, 1788. Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 176, and Sheridan's Speeches, Vol. I., p. 110, and for the other matters cf. *ibid.*, pp. 121, 122, 125, 127.

[2] In a piece "Theatrical Intelligence Extraordinary" which cast the Pittites after the characters in "Tom Jones."

[3] Speeches, Vol. I., p. 124.

the next century. It was a *mélange* of pasquinades in prose and verse, pointed, humorous, and polished, and its later mimic, "The Anti-Jacobin," cannot compare with it, though one of its contributors—George Ellis—then joined Pitt's camp, to which Canning belonged. Sheridan publicly disclaimed any part in its authorship, and his word may be accepted, though we must remember that Sir Walter Scott himself disclaimed the authorship of "Waverley" "on his honour." Not only, however, did Sheridan consort with all the contributors, but verses remain among his papers bearing close resemblance to some of "The Rolliad's" compositions. The writer is fortunate enough to possess an edition in which Sheridan's own notes of the authors' names have been copied out by Ridgway, the publisher. Sheridan's is absent, but the political "epigrams" are identical in style with some of Sheridan's;[1] several of its pieces are described as by an author "unknown" to the Club, or "by the Club, miscellaneous," and these also include Sheridan's "House that George built." Moreover, an ode "addressed to Mr. Hayley," is entirely in the manner of "Clio's Protest," and, addressing Sir Joshua, it thus alludes to Mrs. Sheridan:—

> "Reynolds, haste to my aid, for a figure divine
> Where the pencil of Guido has yielded to thine
> Bear witness the canvas where Sheridan lives,
> And with angels the lovely competitor strives:—
> While Earth claims her beauty and Heaven her strain,
> Be it mine to adore every link of the chain."

The authorship of this, Sheridan notes as "unknown." He was certainly an inspirer and reviser.

The satire emanated from the Foxites who met at Becket's, the bookseller's, under the style of the "Esto Perpetua" Club, and its source was the "smoking and spitting party" made, with Rolle as ringleader, in the House of Commons to

[1] One of these on Pitt is as under:—

> "That Pitt's unhackneyed in the ways of men,
> I fairly own, is now upheld by no man,
> Yet I defy the most malignant pen,
> To say he's hackneyed in the ways of woman."

annoy and interrupt Burke.[1] It dealt with every Foxite grievance and every Pittite foible. Its shafts were aimed at the Westminster Scrutiny, Jenkinson and Court influence, the King and the India Bill, the mercenaries of Warren Hastings, the apostates from the cause, the Irish Propositions :—

"O deep, unfathomable Pitt,
To thee Ierne owes her happiest days!
Wait a bit,
And all her sons shall loudly sing thy praise!
Ierne, happy, happy Maid,
Mistress of the Poplin Trade!
Old Europa's favourite daughter,
Whom first emerging from the water,
In days of yore,
Europa bore
To the celestial Bull!
Behold thy vows are heard, behold thy joys are full."[2]

And once more in Fitzpatrick's strains :—

"Hence, loath'd Monopoly,
Of Avarice foul and Navigation bred;
In the drear gloom
Of British Custom-house Long-room,
'Mongst cockets, clearances and bonds unholy,
Hide thy detested head,
But come thou goddess fair and free,
Hibernian Reciprocity."

It was divided into two parts, "Probationary Odes for the Laureateship" and "Political Eclogues and Miscellanies"; while to these was added, in 1788, one of the best bits of

[1] Cf. Moore's "Journal," Vol. II., p. 298 (O'Beirne's information). The details of authorship as given by Moore are inaccurate. He says that the Dedication to Sir Lloyd Kenyon (Master of the Rolls) was by Adair: it was really by Dr. Lawrence. The "Probationary Ode" which parodied Mason, is not, as Moore has it, by O'Beirne, but, as Sheridan notes, "unknown, not from the Club." But Moore is right in ascribing the "Major Scott's Ode" to Lord J. Townshend. O'Beirne wrote the fourteenth Ode. In another place Moore notes that "The Rolliad's" immediate occasion was an answer that Prettyman, Pitt's secretary, gave Wedgwood on a deputation from the manufacturers. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 295.

[2] Probationary Ode No. 20, by George Ellis.

political fooling ever written, "The Journal of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas," which originally appeared separately (together with other pieces) in "The Album of Streatham, or Ministerial Amusements."[1] The whole is somewhat in the style of Swift's, Pope's, and Arbuthnot's "Scriblerus." The first part takes the shape of "Criticisms on The Rolliad: A Poem: being a more faithful Portraiture of the Present Immaculate Young Minister and His Friends than any extant," and this is followed by "Probationary Odes" attributed to pillars of the ministry. The continuation is a bundle of "Political Miscellanies," comprising classical eclogues.

It has been said that Richard Fitzpatrick, whose facile pen produced some excellent occasional verse, wrote most of the best portions. This is not the case. A little of the best he did write, notably the short patter on Pitt as the "Infant Atlas of the State," on "Beaufoy," "friend to soft repose," and on Speaker Cornwall nodding to Bellamy "for fresh supplies"—lines from which have been already cited.[2] But it was George Ellis who drew the famed portrait of the minister which (so Wraxall asserts) exactly fitted his attitude in 1784:—

> "Pert without fire, without experience sage,
> Young with more art than Shelburne gleaned from age;
> Too proud from pilfered greatness to descend,
> Too humble not to call Dundas his friend.
> In solemn[3] dignity and sullen state
> This new Octavius rises to debate!
> Mild and more mild he sees each placid row
> Of Country Gentlemen with rapture glow;
> He sees convulsed with sympathetic throbs
> Apprentice Peers and Deputy Nabobs,

[1] "Ridgway, 1788." This also contains Lord J. Townshend's "Political Eclogue" on Jekyll. The Dundas Diary is noted by Sheridan as "from the Club, miscellaneous," but one cannot help suspecting that he had a hand in it.

[2] Cf. *ante* (Cornwall) Vol. I., p. 138, also (Beaufoy) *ibid.*, p. 242; and in the present volume, *ante* (Pitt) Ch. II. Fitzpatrick wrote in the first part the rhymed "Extract from the Dedication," and Numbers 5, 9, 12, in the second, Number 5, the political eclogue styled "The Lyars," the "Pindaric Ode," and an "Incantation."

[3] This Sheridan has altered to "silent."

Nor Rum-Contractors[1] think his speech too long,
While words like treacle trickle from his tongue!
O soul congenial to the Souls of Rolles!
Whether you tax the luxury of coals,
Or vote some necessary millions more
To feed an Indian friend's exhausted store,
Fain would I praise (if I like thee could praise)
Thy matchless virtues in congenial lays."

Ellis again it was who made the dying drummer satirise the Duke of Buckingham, and Ellis who wrote the "Irregular Ode for the King's birthday, by Sir George Howard, K.B." :—

"My Muse, for George prepare the splendid song,
O may it float on Schwellenbergen's voice!
Let Maids of Honour sing it all day long,
That Hoggaden's fair ears may hear it and rejoice."

And it was Dr. Lawrence, the most prolific of the contributors—Lawrence, jurist and member of Parliament, fat and heavy outside, but within sparkling and irrepressible—who coupled in one stroke Pitt's tender youth and the hardness of the senatorial benches :—

"Alas! that flesh so late by pedants scarred,
Sore from the rod, should suffer seats so hard";

while he too composed the sixteenth "Probationary Ode," making merry over Thurlow and his comminations :—

"D-mn *Fox* and d-mn *North*,
D-mn *Portland's* mild worth;
D-mn *Devon* the good,
Double d-mn all his name;
D-mn *Fitzwilliam's* blood,
Heir of *Rockingham's* fame;
D-mn *Sheridan's* wit,
The terror of Pitt;
D-mn *Loughborough*, my plague—
—Would his *bagpipe* were split!

* *

D-mn them: d-mn all the partners of their sin;
D-mn them beyond what mortal tongue can tell,
Confound, sink, plunge them all to deepest, blackest Hell!"

[1] The Atkinsons. Fitzpatrick has an excellent line about Pitt, in which Atkinson and Jenkinson are linked together, "Of either Kinson, At- or Jen-, the tool."

Sheridan's friend, Joseph Richardson, was a contributor nearly as fertile. He wrote the diatribe on the Duke of Richmond, the would-be master of fortification, whose inhospitality gave rise to the remark that the only cool place in his house was his kitchen:—

"Hail, thou for either talent justly known,
To spend the nation's cash—or keep thy own;
Expert alike to save or be profuse
As money goes for thine or England's use.

* * * *

Whether thy present vast ambition be
To check the rudeness of th' intruding sea
Or else immerging in a *civil* storm
With equal wisdom to project reform,
Whether thou go'st where summer suns prevail,
To enjoy the freshness of thy kitchen's gale,
Where, unpolluted by luxurious heat,
Its large expanse affords a cool retreat."

To Richardson also belongs the fourth "Probationary Ode," which mocks the sanctimonies of Sir Richard Hill; and Richardson with Tickell, again, originated most of the "Prettymania," poking endless fun at Pitt's old tutor and present secretary; the Prettyman who was an arranger of his debts, and afterwards, under the name of Tomline (assumed with property), a Bishop of Winchester:—

"Pitt and Pretty came from college,
To serve themselves and serve the State,
And the world must all acknowledge
Half is done—so half may wait:
For Pretty says, 'tis rather new,
When even *half* they say—is *true*."

And Richardson with Tickell, once more, derided the renegade Eden in a ballad which long went the round of the town:—

"Then give him a place, O dearest Billy Pitt O!
If he can't have a whole one, O give him a little bit O!"

Among the remaining contributors figured lean Reid, of whom Mrs. Tickell used to complain as he rehearsed these very

verses on her hearthrug;[1] Bate-Dudley, the writing and fighting parson, who married the sister of Mrs. Hartley, a singer, blameless as she was beautiful; and John Townshend, soon prominent in a divorce suit brought by the husband of the Duchess of Devonshire's cousin.[2] Ribald as some of his few compositions are, they rank among the very best, and even the most loyal could not suppress a smile at the subjoined portrait of their Sovereign:—

"Hail, inexhausted boundless spring
Of sacred Truth and holy Majesty!
Grand is thy form—'bout five feet ten,
Thou well-built, worthiest, best of men;
Thy chest is stout, thy back is broad—
Thy Pages view thee and are awed!
Lo! how thy white eyes roll!
Thy whiter eyebrows stare!
Honest soul!
Thou'rt witty as thou'rt fair."

Detached excerpts give no idea of "The Rolliad's" raillery, bristling with topical allusion, while its prose is even wittier than the verse; Rolle's "Pedigree" is inimitable. The confederates in the game may be pictured over their flowing bowl in Becket's parlour: Lawrence, the polyglot (for he wrote in Latin, Greek, French, and Italian), weighted with that learning which Sheridan crisped or the classical George Ellis refined; Reid, with his green-room flavour and nasal twang; Tickell, ambitious to shine; and Townshend, repeating Sheridan's last *jeu d'esprit*.[3] With Sheridan George Ellis remained friendly even

[1] This has already been noticed in the Linley chapter. There are some other allusions to "The Rolliad" in Mrs. Tickell's letters. "Fitzpatrick," she writes in December, 1785, "has done four excellent ones, and T. has been equally successful. . . . Richardson has undertaken for one to S—."

[2] E. Fawkener; the lady was *née* Poyntz. In the Devonshire House MSS. are several exculpatory letters from the Duchess, who was accused of forming the intrigue. The divorce proceedings were published in a pamphlet form, and it was a fashionable *cause célèbre*.

[3] One of 1787, entitled "Appraisement of a Gig bought by the Hon. J. Townshend of the Right Hon. R. Fitzpatrick," remains among the Sheridan MSS. He calls the gig "apparently the relict of a deceased

after he had gone over to Pitt, and a specimen of Sheridan's verse exists in this connection. When Ellis attended Lord Malmesbury's fruitless embassy to France, and was apparently left, like Thackeray long afterwards, "in pawn at Lille," Sheridan thus joked at his friend's apology to the Duchess of Devon, her sister, and Lady Betty Foster:—

"To three fair Ladies in England
We Lords at Lille indite,
Yet pray, fair ladies, understand
We have no time to write.

George Ellis then our scribe must be,
Pray own th' appointment fit,
For George can rhyme as well as we,
And George can lie a bit.

For George has neither post nor fees,
Yet both we think should fit him,
Tho' Malmesbury, not the Prince of Peace,
By proxy should admit him,
And George becomes, good-natured soul,
The greyhound at his button-hole."[1]

Nor was it only at Becket's that the lampooners met. Windham relates how he called at the bookseller's to "settle a party going to Putney, where Mr. Canning was to give the club supper." When, however, he reached the Clement's Lane cottage, he found only the host, Sheridan and Mrs. Sheridan, and the second it was who drove him back as far as "Fulham town." A few months later, however, he tried again, "in hopes of meeting Sheridan," but the elusive wit had taken a boat with his faithful Tickell, and proceeded by water to London.[2] Nor are glimpses absent in Windham's diary of the Sheridans at statelier assemblies, those of the Crewes and the Devonshires,

cheesemonger, much worn by frequent excursions through Whitechapel, circuitous returns by Hornsey, and irregular descents from Highgate."

[1] These are a few of the stanzas which exist alike among the Sheridan MSS. and in some papers that belonged to Lady Bessborough, and are now in the writer's possession. Much of the rest is illegible. The Lille negotiations took place in 1796–7. The "Greyhound" allusion recalls a similar one in Sheridan's "The Statesman."

[2] Cf. Windham's "Diary," pp. 11, 23; July 17 and September 18, 1785.

where George Ellis was also in evidence.[1] And all the while the theatre tangle, now involving Richardson also, grew more and more complicated, though Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth and Mrs. Jordan as Viola, with her soft voice and "the Siddons oh," proved rare attractions.[2] Sheridan led many lives, and he led them at once.

A word should be added of Richardson, Sheridan's close ally in frolic, business, and subsequently in Parliament. A Northumberland man (he was born at Hexham), a distinguished member of St. John's College, Cambridge, and a student at the Middle Temple, he proceeded to the Bar in 1784, when he was twenty-six years of age. He fell in with the Bohemians who formed the cross-current of Sheridan's career, and Sheridan early discerned his ability and forwarded his aims. He joined the *Morning Post* while it was still a Whig journal, with Bate-Dudley for controller. In 1790 he produced his

[1] Cf. Windham's "Diary," pp. 53, 55; May 16 and July 10, 1785:—"Dined at Chiswick: Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Crewe, Sheridan, Crewe, Ellis, Munday, Lord William Russell, Duke of Portland."

[2] Mrs. Tickell, writing to her sister in the late autumn of 1785, says: "Oh, now we are going *downhill*. I knew we should as soon as both houses played together, and there's the *Lord knows what* expenses in new dresses for Arthur and Emmeline." General Burgoyne's comedy of "The Heiress" (which Sheridan touched up) was now preparing, however, and this brought in some revenue again. The Prince came to the stage box to see Mrs. Siddons, and (Mrs. Tickell relates) "seemed very attentive." Tickell, much flattered, had just met him at Brooks's. Of Mrs. Jordan's Viola, "too tragical," writes Mrs. Tickell again; "she would, I am sure, make a sweet *tragedienne*, for her voice in the pathetic is musical and soft and she has the Siddons 'oh' in perfection. . . . She stresses her monosyllables too much, which gives rather a formality to her whole manner, and added to that she has a *leetle* of the Yorkshire accent." In November Mrs. Jordan added "The Romp" (in which part Romney painted her) to the Drury Lane attractions. Later on she writes that "all are in love" with Mrs. Jordan; and early in 1786 things began to flourish again: "Mrs. Jordan begins to equal Mrs. Siddons in the enquiries for places." It may be of interest to subjoin Mrs. Tickell's account of her dress as the Hoyden:—". . . A blue ground with red flowers upon it in shape of a slip, but evidently ill-made on purpose and too scanty by a breadth or two. Her bib and apron had scarcely a pin . . . and a pair of long gauze ruffles, the under-part before, and continually slipping below her elbows, with a very vulgar cap all on one side."

musical farce "The Fugitive," in 1794 he wrote the prologue to Sheridan's "Glorious First of June," and in 1796 the Duke of Norfolk's influence at last brought him into Parliament as member for Newport. To Sheridan—whom he resembled in countenance—he became indispensable, smoothing recurrent conjugal frictions, assisting him in every department, and rarely absent from the table in Bruton Street. When he died in 1803 the vehemence of Sheridan's grief has been noted, and though intemperance may have hastened his end, we cannot believe the gossip which made Sheridan aver that his death was due to over-doses of brandy. Richardson was a man of great talent cut short in his prime, and he left no enemy behind him.[1] But "The Rolliad," and its sequels, have made us linger over the dessert: we must now return to the *pièce-de-résistance.*

With the two exceptions of India, and Warren Hastings,[2] for whose impeachment the Opposition orchestra tuned up already, and of a powerful and humorous dissection of the Duke of Richmond's fortification schemes, which must be relegated to a note, though it rallied many of Pitt's adherents against him,[3] Sheridan's parliamentary efforts of 1786

[1] For this short account, besides various memoirs of the time and mentions in the LeFanu MSS., cf. "Annual Register," 1803. Richardson died at the "Wheatsheaf," Virginia Water, on June 9, 1803, and he was then still a co-proprietor of Drury Lane, subject, however, to the Chancery trust which was then in force. If the "Annual Register" is correct, the D. N. B. is mistaken in the birth date of 1755, for his age is given as only forty-six. Moore in his "Journal" is responsible for Sheridan's "heartless" remark, but it need not be credited, for it is mere gossip. In 1785 Mrs. Tickell writes, "Richardson, Reid and Taylor [Opera-house Taylor] supped with us, and we had a great deal of laughing. Richardson's *gaucheries* were beyond all calculation. He improves every day."

[2] For one of Sheridan's speeches on these matters in 1786 (June 26) an informal whip was issued; cf. Windham's "Diary," p. 80.

[3] Though most of the causes which Sheridan supported were negatived by overwhelming majorities, Mr. Bastard's amendment, which he now advocated, was only lost through the Speaker's casting vote. Fox singled out Sheridan's long and argumentative speech for especial praise, and the debate lasted till seven in the morning. Sheridan cut up Pitt's argument that the scheme for fortifying the dockyards would diminish the standing army, and he powerfully criticised Pitt's charge of inconsistency because the Coalition

dealt mainly with financial detail—army estimates, national debt, and Supply. Not till next year did he attack Pitt's wise tariff treaty with France, which provoked an anti-Gallic onslaught from Fox. The next chapter will deal with Sheridan's Begum speech of February, 1787, the prelude to his triumphs at the great Trial of the following year. But already the Prince and his debts loomed once more on the political horizon, and an episode which caused Rolle to play censor of morals was to bring the whole question of the marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert to the fore. Sheridan's part in this episode—one more of his dubious positions—will close the present chapter. Yet before approaching it, a fresh glance must be taken at his home life, for it is partly bound up with the circumstances which caused him to act as he did when Fox loudly denied the Prince's marriage in the House of Commons.

Sheridan and his wife now moved in the circles of Devonshire and Carlton Houses, and their expenses began to multiply, though Parliament privileged the prodigal from arrest. "Our situation," wrote Mrs. Tickell to her sister, "is even more dangerous than his in respect to money matters, as far as relates

Ministry had harboured part of a similar plan but withdrawn it. He showed how many positions Pitt himself had re-fashioned or abandoned. "Every pass at home was left unfortified or defenceless." When he came to the Duke of Richmond himself, he pursued the metaphor. He had given "striking proofs of his genius as an engineer, which appeared even of the planning and construction of the paper in his hand. . . . He had made it an argument of posts, and conducted his reasoning upon trigonometry as well as logic. There were certain detached data, like advanced works, to keep the enemy at a distance from the main object in debate. Strong provisions covered the flanks of his assertions. His very queries were in casements. No impression therefore was to be made on this fortress of sophistry by desultory observations, and it was necessary to sit down before it, and assail it by regular approaches. It was fortunate, however, to observe that notwithstanding all the skill employed by the noble and literary engineer, his mode of defence on paper was open to the same objection which had been urged against his other fortifications, that if his adversary got possession of one of his posts, it became strength against him, and the means of subduing the whole line of his argument." Cf. Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 161—174 (February 27, 1786).



Mrs. SHERIDAN,

from a painting on glass

after the portrait by Gainsborough.

to T.'s personal safety." The burden of Sheridan's Drury Lane liabilities encumbered him. This very year his wife wrote from the Crewes' after visiting the Wynns, "Tell me all about your affairs, my dearest Dick, and tell me honestly whether we ought in prudence to indulge our inclinations for a country life. Have you done anything in regard to the Prince of Wales, which you said you would if you could? If you could but get a friend to relieve you from these ruinous annuities, it would make us both happy."[1] But Sheridan would do no such thing. Not two years later, when he was called "the Prince's prime minister," his sister Elizabeth, grateful for his care and shelter, informed their sister Alicia that he might have had any post for the asking, but obstinately refused to ask. Somehow he struggled on. Mrs. Sheridan had seen a house at Grasford and for a moment hoped for retirement there. "If repaired," she wrote, "you would like it very much." True, "the prospect from the front" was "a little Chesterish," but then it resembled a house at Wynnstay—"Nantyballin on a small scale," and there was "a natural cascade as good as Mr. Watkin's artificial one." This rural dream soon faded, and year by year they made the same round of grand visits—Wynnstay, Chatsworth, Crewe Hall, and the Bouveries' Delapré Abbey. Mrs. Sheridan was often left alone while the session detained her husband in town. And then these "fine people," as Jane Linley styled them—for she sometimes went in her sister's wake—won Mrs. Sheridan's money. "Oh, my own," she wrote this year to Sheridan from Crewe Hall, "'ee can't think how they beat me every night. If it goes on, I shall soon be on the debtor's side of Mrs. Crewe's book. . . . It is the abominable whist they make me play—twenty-one guineas last night and fifteen before. . . . I tell you this that you may provide accordingly, for I very much fear you will find no little hoard here when you come. But, my soul, when *do* you come? . . . Woodcocks are so plenty here that you may knock them down with your hat. Well, God thee bless, my soul. Me want to see 'ee eyes

[1] Sheridan MSS.

very bad. Your own." The reader will remember that Mrs. Tickell, once prying into a note from her sister to Sheridan, spoke of "such sugar words," and, indeed, nothing can exceed the tenderness of her endearments. "'Tis duller than a wool-horse here, sir," she wrote again from Crewe Hall, "and if you are tired of hearing the same things repeated over and over again, you must bid me not write any more, for I have nothing else to say but that I love 'ee dearer than my life and am very impatient for your return. . . . God thee bless and preserve my dearest Love." She liked pets, and he had given her those exotic birds, the "Avadavats," which "The School for Scandal" mentions, which Mrs. Tickell called her "little family," and on which Sheridan once penned an elegy.[1] She

[1] "Why trickles the tear from Elizabeth's eye?
Why thus interrupted her elegant chat?
Ah! bootless that tear and bootless that sigh,
They cannot revive your poor *Avadavat!*

Each bird that is born of an egg has its date,
No power can lengthen its days beyond that:
Then let us submit to the dictates of fate,
And no longer lament the poor *Avadavat.*

Some comfort it is that no violent death
Assailed it from shooter, from birdlime or cat,
But a common disorder arrested its breath:
'Twas the husk served its writ on the *Avadavat.*

The prisoner insolvent who dies in the Fleet
From death gets his *Habeas*, as Wilkes did from Pratt;
When caged up for life, no joys could be sweet,
And this was the case with the *Avadavat.*

And now it has flown to new scenes of delight,
Where Venus's pigeons long cooing have sat,
While Lesbia's sparrow with envy moults white,
And the Muses all chirp to the *Avadavat.*

Astonished they list to its musical throat,
And Euterpe in vain tries a sharp or a flat:
In vain! for from *Her* the sweet bird caught its note
Who excels every Muse, as her *Avadavat.*"

Transcribed by Rae (presumably from the Canning album), Vol. II., pp. 121, 122. The inferiority of these pretty verses to Catullus's on "Lesbia's Sparrow" is apparent. In the "School" Uncle Oliver sends "China

styled herself his "Cootum," and when Mr. Crewe wished her to ride a pony, she thought, "If my Dick comes back and finds his poor *Cootum* with a cracked crown, he won't like that, so me refused, sir."

And yet veiled temptation encompassed her in those dainty houses, while the tone of their set gradually began to unstring her fibre. To air a lover, even if platonic, was the fashion, a bad vogue which Sheridan bore in mind when he depicted Lady Teazle. For the present, St. Cecilia remained her pure, sweet self, but even now Sheridan's jealousy was sometimes piqued. Mrs. Tickell had bantered her on that very Mr. Fawkener who has been seen robbed of his wife by John Townshend. Mrs. Sheridan had met him at Lord Derby's, and now at Crewe Hall, whether on his account or another's, her husband began to feel uneasy. All his misgivings proved groundless, and when she thanks him for his "nice, comfortable, charming letter," "me only vex," she adds in her "little language," "that you should ever fret yourself and be unhappy without the shadow of a cause, and indeed, my Heart's own, I will do or not do anything to make 'ee happy, but if you have confidence in me, you will not wish to make me do anything remarkable, or studiously avoid every person whose society happens to be more agreeable to me than Mr. R. Wilbraham's or such people." And in all the whirl of her London life—constantly up till three at parties—waiting at Mrs. Bouverie's till six to hear the result of a debate from Sheridan, as befitted so keen a partisan,[1]—"Indeed," wrote Elizabeth Sheridan, 'the life she leads would kill a horse, but she says she must do as other people do"—in all this racket, her heart stayed with her boy[2]

shawls, congou tea, avadavats and Indian crackers." The last of these appear in "The Rolliad's" "Diary of Henry Dundas" as one of the bribes proffered by the East India directors.

[1] In 1788 the same correspondent saw her starting on a canvassing tour for Townshend and "surrounded by Townshend's ribbons, one of which she pinned to my handkerchief." LeFanu MSS.

[2] This year (1786) little Tom Sheridan—he was only eleven—left Mr. Cotton's private school at Salt Hill for Dr. Parr, "who," writes Elizabeth Sheridan, "takes only four boys and is reckoned a very clever

and her people in Norfolk Street. "I am more interested," she wrote to her husband, "in their good looks than in all the dukes and ladies in the world, God thee for ever bless and preserve." She had read some of his last letter aloud to the Crewes. "And how I was envied by them," she adds, "for having such a kind, good-natured, attentive little Bodye of a Husband, but I told 'em 'ee didn't love me a bit better than I deserved, for that I cared for nothing in the world but 'ee." These feelings never left her, but for a space, and a space only, her outlook on life changed. Only two years later Elizabeth Sheridan described this phase, which eventually, as will appear, endangered a virtue that it could never undo. "Mrs. Sheridan," she informed her sister, "always amiable and obliging, has adopted ideas on many subjects so very different from what mine must be, that we can never converse with that freedom that minds in some sort of the same kind indulge in. She told me last night she had converted Mrs. Canning, who was *uncommonly rigid* in her notions. . . ." On this Elizabeth assured Mrs. Sheridan that she "allowed others to indulge their own way of thinking and should no more quarrel with a woman for thinking differently in point of morals" than she should "on religious matters if she had happened to be brought up a Mahometan."[1] The wife of 1786 and 1787 was not yet the wife of 1788 and 1789, but she was wavering. Sheridan himself was quite cured of his early infatuation for Mrs. Crewe; it was old and forgiven history. "You know," wrote the same sister, "that Mrs. Crewe among other lovers (favoured ones I mean) has had our brother in her train. As his fame and consequence in life have increased, her charms have diminished, and . . . his affection, esteem and attention returned to their proper channel, and he never has seemed, or I believe never was in truth so much attached to his wife as of late, and this his *dear friend cannot bear*." The "dear

man." The sister relates how she went to see her brother and his wife at breakfast, and found her weeping at the parting. LeFanu MSS.

[1] *Ibid.* Miss E. Sheridan to Mrs. Alicia LeFanu, "Monday, [December] 22, Evening, 1788."

friend," then, was "Amoret"—whom the same sister depicts as most delicate in her open-handedness, and very much "the fine lady." How far Sheridan was quit of her in 1786 is shown by a letter from him to the Duchess of Devonshire after a stay at Chatsworth and before a visit to Bath. From Crewe Hall he thus describes the moods of its mistress, and his allusions point to the Fawkener incident and to the scrape into which it had brought the impulsive Duchess. Sheridan had evidently smoothed matters between the annoyed Duke and his consort. "I have waited with the greatest impatience for the hour of liberty to remind you and Lady Elizabeth of one who never thinks of either of you without a mixture of pleasure and pain. I hope it is not necessary for me to entreat you both not to forget me. I am more interested in your happiness than half those who with fine speeches and cold hearts impose on your natural openness and sincerity; and though it is impossible for those who know you at all not to love you, yet I will be confident in saying they cannot feel towards you as I do and must after all that passed. . . . She [Mrs. Crewe] has asked me a thousand questions of various kinds, to all of which I have answered as I would to the town Cryer if I was questioned by him. I believe she feels that my heart is shut against her, and behaves accordingly; but I dare not complain, nor would it be of any service to me if I did. She is of an unhappy disposition, and there are moments when, in spite of her behaviour, I feel inclined to pity her. For my own part all situations are pretty much the same to me when there are cribbage or whist parties. There at least I escape observation; a grave look may denote a bad hand, and an accidental sigh may be that of regret at getting out a wrong card. Here I find it doubly necessary to be so occupied, for the attention of *Friendship* does not suffer a word or look to escape, and, by officious enquiries of my health or spirits, [to] point out an occasion for reproach to him whom I wish always to see happy by appearing perfectly so myself."[1]

[1] *I.e.* the Duke. Cf. "The Two Duchesses," pp. 111, 112. In 1789 Sir Gilbert too complained of Mrs. Crewe's indiscretion. He says: "She has

Still another cause contributed to friction. Mrs. Bouverie's friendship was naturally preferred by Mrs. Sheridan, and in the end an open breach occurred between her and Mrs. Crewe. Yet all these persons, husbands and wives, flattering friends and intriguing rivals, were in close and continual contact. "A strange system you will say altogether," comments Elizabeth Sheridan, "and for such people to associate and disgrace the name of friendship is truly disgusting, yet such, I am told, is the universal practice of the great world." These, and women like them, led dual lives, periodically retiring in penitence, often public-spirited, carefully educating their children, yet deeming that certain principles were vulgar prejudices, and that the globe was created for their especial pleasure. In the corrupter side of such a society lurked the seeds of tragedy, and some tragedy was to darken the lives of the Sheridans.

> "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us."

Mrs. Bouverie, winsome and accomplished, courting admiration, yet untouched by a breath of scandal, was typical of the set, and followed Sheridan's footsteps.[1] Like the rest, she was literary, and occasionally she composed songs for Drury Lane, though Mrs. Tickell intimates that Sheridan was the real author.[2] Now Mrs. Bouverie was born a Fawkener, and therefore allied to the Devonshires; nor was she less in touch with the Prince's *entourage*. Her kinsman, Lord Radnor (the father of Cobbett's friend), stood high in "Florizel's" favour.

become a most wearing companion to me, . . . so extremely communicative of her own secrets and other people's that if one had much curiosity it would be worth while to be bored for an evening or so to hear her budget; but the price is too heavy." Cf. "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 326.

[1] Verses by Sheridan remain among his papers commemorating a "jaunt" about this time to Richmond, in which Fox, Fitzpatrick and Meynell figure among the men, and Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Bouverie among the women. The verses are in dialogue.

[2] "Mrs. Bouverie's song; that is, it came in her handwriting, so you may know the author." Sheridan MSS. (Tickell Corr.)



Mrs. BOUVRIE

from an engraving,

after the portrait by Richard Cosway.

Edward Bouverie [1] was one of his household, and had attended him in the preceding December to Park Street, when Robert Burt officiated at the secret nuptials of the heir-apparent and Maria Fitzherbert. Through her circle and the Duchess of Devonshire's the Sheridans first met the lady who was to prove the redeeming influence in George's life. Georgiana, despite her after-scruples,[2] conspired in all the romantic preludes to the wedding. Just before the twice-made widow[3] had sought to escape from her love and her lover by flight abroad, it was the Duchess (and in response to the same Edward Bouverie) who escorted her to Carlton House, where the frantic wooer (and actor) had wounded himself.[4] She it was who led her in when at length she consented to let him place the ring on her finger, and she was with her when she went out his affianced bride. Mrs. Fitzherbert's principles were unimpugned; she was virtuous, and it was honourable to both that no ceremony save one of marriage could be entertained. But the rite was fraught with danger. By the Act of Settlement the successor who wedded a Papist forfeited the crown; by the Royal Marriage Act the union of a prince under the age of twenty-five without parental consent was null and void. The peace of the beauty's conscience was bought at the cost of an invalid

[1] Edward Bouverie, M.P. for Northampton, was the second son of the first Viscount Folkestone.

[2] Writing to her mother in February, 1786, the Duchess said, "As to Mrs. F., I never will go to the opera with her; I never did and never will, and she knows it. What I mean to do is this. I know that her intentions once were perfectly honourable and prudent. Seeing another turn had taken place, I strongly dissuaded him from his ideas. She encourages him, you say, in public. . . . I search into nothing, and only wish to keep entirely out of it. I shall leave my name with her, and if I have a large assembly, ask her, because Mrs. F., an unmarried woman, suffering the visits of an unmarried man, is no reason for not being civil to her." Devonshire House MSS. (printed in the *Anglo-Saxon Review* for September, 1899).

[3] Wraxall has pointed out (Vol. IV., p. 320) how many English princes had shown this predilection for widows: the Black Prince, Edward IV., Henry VIII., and the three uncles of George himself.

[4] In November, 1784, Mrs. Fitzherbert escaped to Aix-la-Chapelle, and afterwards to Holland, Paris, Switzerland and Lorraine.

marriage (though the statute could be repealed) and at the direct risk of imperilling the succession. There can be little doubt that such as preferred an informal tie acted as politicians. The interest of the new Whigs was to prevent a binding marriage: the Prince was an asset of their hopes and an advantage for their party. Though none had protested more hotly against the Marriage Act than Charles Fox, yet none knew better what desperate devotion had urged the Prince to appeal in reams of paper to the King, and even to meditate emigration with his lady-love to America.[1] Not a week before the wedding Fox had written urgently imploring him not to take the step which madness might inspire, and had been answered by a brazen denial of any such intention. Cynical in his attitude to most women except his future wife, Fox preferred to see Mrs. Fitzherbert the royal mistress and scouted all notion of the royal bride. But he could scarcely gauge the strength of a good woman's will. Mrs. Fitzherbert was resolute, and at six in the evening of December 15th, 1785, she became one who might indeed be Queen of Hanover but could never be Queen of England.

Here Sheridan's attitude, once more, differed from that of Fox. He esteemed Mrs. Fitzherbert; he sympathised with the course that, though concealed, was generally suspected. So carefully was the secret kept, that no shred of proof, even long afterwards, was known to exist; but neither Sheridan nor Fox can have resisted the conclusion that the Prince was married. Both

[1] The Prince, as is well known, was in despair when his Maria fled, and he wanted to scour the Continent to find her. "Mrs. Fox, then Mrs. Armstead, who was living at St. Anne's, has repeatedly assured me," says Lord Holland, "that he came down thither more than once to converse with her and Mr. Fox on the subject; that he cried by the hour; that he testified to the sincerity and violence of his passion and his despair by the most violent expressions and actions, rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forgo the crown, sell his jewels and plate and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America." Cf. "Memoirs of the Whig Party," and Wilkins's "Mrs. Fitzherbert," Vol. I., p. 52.

shrewdly abstained from probing the matter, yet the connivance of the Bouveries, and the fact that Mrs. Fitzherbert continued to be received by the leaders of their acquaintance, can hardly have left them in reasonable doubt. What Horne Tooke published as common knowledge, and praised as meritorious,[1] must have been within their cognisance, though some public denial alone could stave off the grave consequences that might ensue. History had repeated itself; it was the case of James, Duke of York, over again, and the analogy of his subsequent disavowal is extraordinarily close. The Prince's debts were pressing, nor had the bailiffs reverenced his rank. He had a right to complain of stinted revenue if he was to support his traditional dignity before the foreign princes and ambassadors who visited him. The works at Carlton House were costly, and they were still unfinished and unpaid for.[2] He threatened to suspend the improvements, to retire into private life and to defray his debts by retrenchment.[3] It was supposed that Pitt would take the matter in hand, but the Opposition was eager to forestall him, although this question of the marriage might well be mooted against them. It was arranged that Alderman Newnham, a city magnate, should bring forward a motion, after interrogating Pitt as to whether he proposed "to rescue the Prince of Wales from his present very embarrassed condition." This happened on April 20, 1787. Pitt answered that without the King's command he could do nothing, and Newnham gave notice that he would bring forward his motion again in a fortnight.

[1] "A Letter to a Friend on the Reported Marriage, etc."

[2] A whole bundle of papers relating to these remains among the Sheridan MSS. An estimate for the "Gallery" alone amounts to £110,500. "At the end of the room a Temple furnished with glass Chimney Piece, a clock girandole, and glass chandelier. Within the Temple, a Cabinet furnished. These rooms hung and furnished with chairs and sophas suitable to them. . . ." The works were under the control of Colonel Hulse and the architect, James Holland.

[3] It was objected that this was unfair to the nation, and it was suggested that one of his intimates, not Fox, had so counselled him. But from several indications it is likelier that the decision was his own.

The ministers and the monarch were now alarmed. It had been hoped hitherto that the marriage secret would have deterred the Prince's friends from bringing affairs to a head and exposing the sordid facts. Pitt took counsel and determined on initiative. Four days later he rose in a crowded House to ask what the scope would be of the Alderman's motion. The well-primed Newnham rejoined that he had no wish to force on a matter which forced itself forward, though he would have been glad if the ministers had relieved him of his duty. He could not yet give the House the precise shape of his proposed motion, but its aim was to rescue the Prince from his difficulties. Fox supported him most vehemently. The subject and the circumstances were novel. But then, with his wonted precipitation, he fell into Pitt's trap by enlarging on the "delicacy" of the position and the painful necessity of inquiring into the sources of these embarrassments. "Delicacy" gave Pitt his cue. He agreed that the circumstances were delicate and that the cause must be examined. "If the honourable magistrate, however, should determine to bring it forward, he would, however distressing it might be to him as an individual, discharge his duty to the public, and enter fully into the subject."

It was now the Opposition's turn to feel frightened. But they resolved to brave it out. On April 26, the subject was skilfully skirted round, but on the next day, the tug of war began. Newnham, after reminding the House that the ministers had done nothing, moved that an "humble address" be presented to the Throne for such relief as the King might think fit to meet the emergency. Pitt was about to rise when Rolle, rough and rustic, intervened. "No Popery" was a cry that would rally the country-side. He declared that the question affected "our Constitution in Church and State," and that when the alderman had finished, he should move the previous question. Pitt, so largely dependent on the squirearchy, found this no laughing matter. It had now become a party issue, and the convenience of innuendo would be difficult to maintain. Fox was absent, perhaps on purpose, and Sheridan rose in his

stead. All were on tenterhooks for the pitched battle evidently impending between him and Rolle. Sheridan said that he differed wholly from those who represented that this motion involved "Church and State"; indeed, he did not well know "what precise meaning to affix to expressions of this kind." Rolle had diverged from the real subject of debate, which was the grievance of "the unparalleled difficulties under which the heir to the Crown had been so long suffered to labour." "Whatever was brought forward he knew would meet with an unequivocal and complete reply, such as he was assured His Royal Highness would himself give as a Peer of Great Britain, were a question of this nature to be agitated in another House. How far the discussion might be proper, he left to the feeling of the gentleman to whom he alluded to determine."

But Rolle doggedly persisted. If this "improper" motion were urged, he "would not flinch, . . . but act as became an independent country gentleman to act upon such an occasion, and state without reserve his sentiments as they struck him. He would do his duty"—a phrase which in Parliament often masks offensive behaviour. And so he sat down, a veritable "fine old English gentleman all of the olden time." By directly introducing the extraneous point of the Prince's marriage, he had thrown a bombshell into the ranks of both sides. And then Pitt, fearful of results, threw another, which he hoped might at once explode both Rolle and the motion. If Newnham persevered, he said—and a sensation arose as he said it—he "should be driven with infinite reluctance to the disclosure of circumstances which he should otherwise think it his duty to conceal." This was bluff, and when the time came he did no such thing. Not one of the speakers on either side but chicaned throughout, except the village Hampden, and his honesty was not wholly honest, for it was bound up with imported rancour. Newnham was pressed to withdraw, and Sheridan rose again. He spoke "with great warmth." Why, he urged, should the country members take alarm? The motion concerned debts alone. And then he adroitly turned on Pitt: "Some honourable gentlemen had thought proper to express their anxious wishes

that the business should be deferred, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer had erected an insuperable barrier to such a step. It would seem to the country, to all Europe, that the Prince had yielded to terror what he had denied to argument. What could the world think of such conduct, but that he fled from inquiry and dared not face his accusers? But if such was the design of these threats, he believed they would find that the author of them had as much mistaken the feelings as the conduct of the Prince." He spoke for his friends who refused to retire from their duty. Thus far Pitt had been foiled, and the Opposition relapsed into injured innocence.

The word marriage had not been used, nor the precise shape of Rolle's future questions defined. But Sheridan knew that by whatever form the two lovers had been united, the ceremony was void in the sight of man. What he wished to stave off was any declaration that the Prince had wedded a Catholic; the Gordon riots might be revived. And he also wanted to put Pitt into the dilemma of either siding with Rolle, which would displease the King, or effecting a satisfactory settlement without further scandal.

Later in the evening Pitt was driven to back out. The particulars to which he had alluded—the "correspondence," as he soon termed it—related (he said) "*only to the pecuniary embarrassments*": it "had no reference to any extraneous circumstance." Sheridan expressed his relief, though Pitt had now explained away the natural construction of his original words, and as to *that* matter, he again warned him, "any sort of allusion would have been in the extremest degree indelicate and disrespectful." The Opposition had triumphed, and Pitt, who wished to settle the question of the Prince's debts himself, had been detached from the alderman's motion. Rolle was now left in solitary state, but Sheridan had still to reckon with the rugged plain speaking of one who would certainly not indulge in "delicacy" or "respect."[1]

[1] For the preceding cf. Wilkins's "Mrs. Fitzherbert," Vol. I., pp. 176—184 (relying on "Parliamentary History," Vol. XXVI.), and cf. Sheridan's Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 229—310, and Wraxall, Vol. IV., pp. 453 *et seq.*: he

That same night, it is said, Sheridan repaired to Carlton House, where his distracted master no doubt answered, "Pooh! nonsense! ridiculous!"[1]—the very words, as he assured Croker years afterwards, that he had just used to Fox. Prince Florizel had no qualms when his interests were at stake, and, so far, a casuist might defend the quibble. As Prince, he was certainly unmarried, nor, with his debts in view, was he man enough to sacrifice the throne for a woman. He hoped and believed that a loose and general denial would suffice. Next morning Pitt sent for Lord Southampton and asked him to be the bearer of his recantation to the Prince, who replied haughtily that "he never received verbal messages except from the King."[2] Pitt remembered this some two years later, when he paid out the impertinent in his own coin at a time when the King was incapable of sending messages any longer.

On April 30 Fox was to present the case of his royal principal, and to confound the impenitent Rolle. Meanwhile, a treaty was in course between Pitt and the Prince's friends; it was hoped that the King would relent. Fox had received the lover's laughing denial,[3] and Sheridan had visited Mrs. Fitzherbert. He told her that Parliament would exact some explanation of her footing with the Prince. He dwelt on the "danger and delicacy" of his own position, and Mrs. Fitzherbert, trembling between fears for her husband and the

regards Fox as wholly the Prince's dupe. Adolphus, who traces the debates and adds the rumour of a Papist marriage (Vol. IV., pp. 218—223), is curiously silent as to Sheridan's rescue of Mrs. Fitzherbert from public degradation, which will shortly be mentioned.

[1] Cf. Croker Papers, Vol. I., p. 292.

[2] Cf. Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 184.

[3] Cf. the Prince's own account in Croker just cited. Mr. Wilkins thinks that Fox relied solely on the Prince's written disclaimer of December, 1785, but not only is there no surviving evidence of this, but the terms of that denial, though repeating Fox's words about malicious falsehood in regard to the marriage, also embraced the question of the debts, and Fox must have had an interview with the Prince before making it. Lord Stourton believed that the Prince instructed Fox on a scrap of paper, which would probably have been destroyed. At any rate, it does not survive.

dread of public debasement, replied that "they knew she was like a dog with a log tied round its neck, and they must protect her."[1] Sheridan reassured her. So far as he was concerned she felt sure of protection. All depended on how the farce was to be played out. A denial of the unascertained wedlock in general terms would satisfy both the public and the prevaricators. But Fox, as actually happened, might be hurried into indiscretion, and exceed the Prince's authority. This is the true solution of Fox's behaviour in the matter, and it was so considered at the time.[2] He cannot be said to have been practised on by the Prince, except in so far as he wished to be deceived, or, at least, never troubled to search into facts.

The expected evening of April 30 arrived. The Alderman prefaced his motion by deprecating the pressure brought on him to burke it. Pitt had whittled away his intimidating words, but "the gentleman who had made use of the expressions relative to Church and State, was bound as a man of honour to come to an open explanation." Before Rolle could reply, up sprang Fox. "He desired it to be understood not as speaking lightly, but as speaking *from the immediate authority* of the Prince of Wales, . . . that there was no part of his Royal Highness's conduct that he was afraid or unwilling to have investigated in the most minute manner. With regard to the private 'correspondence' alluded to, he wished to have it laid before the House." It would present a pattern of filial obedience (and the "correspondence," of course, had proved to be nothing but the Prince's financial budget of letters to his father). The Prince, if

[1] Langdale's "Memoir of Mrs. Fitzherbert," cited by Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 186.

[2] Cf. (*inter alia*) Lord Auckland's "Journal," Vol. I., p. 423 (hitherto unnoticed): "Mrs. Fitzherbert's connections are abusing Fox, I hear, loudly, for having said more in the Commons than he had *authority* for." Lord Stourton, too, said that the Prince was only received back to Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour "by repeated assurances that Mr. Fox had never been *authorised* to make the declaration" (Langdale's "Memoir," cited by Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 203). Horne Tooke actually refused to believe on "newspaper authority" that "the marriage was formally and solemnly disavowed." Cf. his "Letter to a Friend" ("Postscript"), p. 44.

the House required it, would give an account in writing, "a general and fair account." So far, so good; the debts were dissociated from the marriage. "With respect to the allusion to something full of danger to the Church and State, . . . it was impossible to say with certainty to what that allusion referred. But he supposed it must be meant in reference to that miserable calumny, that low, malicious falsehood, which had been propagated without doors, and made the wanton sport of the vulgar." Such scandals were bad enough at large, but "when it appeared that an invention so monstrous, a report of a fact *actually impossible* to have happened, had been circulated with so much industry as to have made an impression on the minds of members," it proved the malignant hostility of "an anti-Brunswick faction," that had fabricated "a tale in every particular so unfounded, and for which there was not the shadow of anything like reality." The Prince's debts were the concern of the nation. "His Royal Highness had authorised him to declare that, as a peer of Parliament, he was ready . . . to submit to the most searching investigation respecting it, or to afford his Majesty or his Majesty's ministers the fullest assurances of the *utter falsehood of the fact in question*, which never had, and common sense must see, never *could* have happened."

Here Fox protested too much and overshot his mark. The form of marriage was a "fact," the royal marriage was no fact at all. After Pitt had rebuked Fox's over-zeal for his hints against the King, Rolle went behind all sophistry. Everyone knew that what law and statute forbade could not have happened. But there were ways in which it might have taken place. The laws might have been evaded. This should be cleared up. He stood his ground.

Fox (perhaps with the three bottles in him) once more started to his feet, and outdid himself. "He did not deny the calumny in question merely with regard to *the effect* of certain existing laws, but he denied it *in toto*, in point of fact as well as of law. The fact not only never could have happened legally, but never did happen in any way whatsoever, and had from the beginning been a base and malicious falsehood," and he

added in answer to Rolle that he had "spoken from direct authority." The fat was in the fire, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was disgraced. Rolle sat silent. Sheridan, who must have shuddered at Fox's indiscretion, then rose to brave it out. He called on Rolle to speak. In the face of Fox's statement his silence was "unhandsome." But Rolle would only vouchsafe a sneer at the "answer," the "propriety" of which the House would adjudge. Then Sheridan retrieved the situation. Rolle "was bound in honour and fairness" either to confess himself satisfied, or to take some means of testing the question. Otherwise (and here Sheridan bore the squire's past threats of impeachment in mind), otherwise "the House ought to come to a resolution that it was seditious and disloyal to propagate reports injurious to the character of the Prince of Wales." Rolle remained immovable. He had not invented those reports, but "they had made an impression on his mind." Pitt next intervened. Sheridan ought rather to be "obliged" to the originator of a debate "which had been the means of bringing forward so explicit a declaration on so interesting a subject, and one which must give complete satisfaction." Sheridan, however, would not acquit Rolle. He wanted finality, and again he pressed the recalcitrant either to assent or investigate. Rolle, however, was not to be baulked, and answered that "the honourable gentleman had not heard him say he was not satisfied."

A conversation, or rather an altercation, followed. Early in this year a new aspirant to fame had distinguished himself in the Opposition ranks. Grey—"the boy who tossed his head so high"—was the Duchess of Devonshire's newest and youngest favourite. Handsome, haughty, and ambitious, a democrat-patrician, he hoped to outstrip both Fox, who as yet mistrusted him, and Sheridan, with whom as yet he was friendly. He too consorted with the Prince, and he too showed no mercy on the Prince's wife. Grey, after denouncing Rolle's attitude as "unmanly and ungenerous," violently attacked Pitt. His previous hints of the "correspondence" had been mere menaces to deter the House from the consideration of an

important issue, and Pitt had added to these insinuations by mingling outside rumour with the question of the debts. Pitt, for his part, once more disclaimed any such intentions, and Grey "pledged himself to prove the necessity for the Prince's application, since those whose duty it was to do it, had not saved themselves the trouble of throwing him upon the generosity of the House. The Prince's situation was such as disgraced the country."[1]

Historians have made much of Fox's ineradicable candour, but politics will undo the most truthful. Fox scorned to tell a lie, but his course on the India Bill had been at least ambiguous. The usurer in Sheridan's comedy exclaims, "You know I always speak the truth and scorn to tell a lie," to which Charles Surface replies, "Right. People that speak truth generally do." And on this occasion Fox did not make his peace with the good-looking lady "over the settee."

A trick had been palmed off on the nation, nor had the discreditable episode ended. Mrs. Fitzherbert was in despair. Even the Continental papers took up the tale,[2] and Horne Tooke well said that the honourable course would have been for Parliament to have refused its accommodation "*until the Prince was married.*" All England, every print-shop, paraded the slander, and even at Brooks's Fox was told by Orlando Bridgeman (afterwards Lord Bradford) that a libel it was, for Bridgeman had stood on guard at the door when Mrs. Fitzherbert became the wife of the Prince of Wales. Her name—the good name of a good Catholic—had been tarnished, and Fox's tactlessness was the cause. She turned to Sheridan for his promised protection, and she did not turn in vain. Fox had rent the veil: it was now for his friend to replace it.[3] Sheridan's chivalry at this most

[1] Parl. Deb., p. 1074, April 30, 1787.

[2] "C'est une explication," said the *Courier de l'Europe* of Fox's statement, "qui est d'autant plus facheuse pour Madame Fitzherbert, qui l'on a supposé des liens entre S.A.R. et cette dame," and it went on to say that she could no longer be received in the circles frequented by the Prince.

[3] Cf. Wraxall, Vol. V., p. 390. No trace remained among Fox's papers of the Prince's authority for his statement, though it was said that a scrap

equivocal juncture is the sole part of it that does any of them credit. She had threatened to quit the Prince unless her character was vindicated, and she was indignant with Fox for besmirching her character. On that fatal night of April 30, perpetual messengers posted between Westminster and Carlton House. When all was over Sheridan and Grey hurried to their master and put the best face on the form of Fox's denial; the words had been uttered within closed walls, and perhaps, they urged, the reporters might soften them. The Prince, more keen for the settlement of his debts than considerate for wounded feelings, wrote to Fox at midnight, signing himself "Ever affectionately your's." He was more "comfortable" after Sheridan's account and Grey's, but he begged to see him next morning; his "*friend*" was disquieted, and he wanted to tell Fox what had passed. Next morning he broke the news to that "friend" quite airily, and, clasping her hands, exclaimed, "Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife; did you ever hear of such a thing?" But the victim understood the butcher. "She made no reply, she changed countenance, and turned pale."[1] He might shed the tears and bestow the caresses which were his birthright, but until she was publicly justified she could not believe that he had a heart, or a right to hers. Here was a pretty predicament for the selfishness that could not part with Mrs. Fitzherbert, yet dreaded a severance from Fox.[2] No record remains of Fox's interview with the Prince. It must have been the reverse of pleasant, if Grey's memory forty years onwards is trustworthy, for he then assured Lord Holland that *he* in his turn had been sent for and besought to mitigate his chief's headlong denial. Grey can scarcely have been said to have been tricked by the Prince: moving in the same circles, he had abetted the same story. But, with laudable indignation, he refused to impeach Fox's

of writing existed. It is possible of course that he only referred to the Prince's early disclaimer of December, 1785.

[1] Langdale, cited by Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 202.

[2] Cf. his statement, "The Croker Papers," Vol. I., p. 293.

truthfulness, nor does it seem to have entered his head that a middle way might be found. Fox had quoted direct authority, and if he had been cheated, he was the sole person who ought to correct the warranty that had misled him. According to this story, which can hardly lack some foundation, George "terminated the interview abruptly, threw himself on a sofa, and muttered: 'Well, if nobody else will, Sheridan must.'"[1] But within a few years of this recollection and after Moore had repeated it, the Prince traversed the whole:—"There is not a word of truth in this. I had no kind of communication with Mr. Grey on the subject, and Sheridan's interference was, so far as I was concerned, perfectly accidental." His own version differs entirely: "Calling that morning at Mrs. Fitzherbert's, Sheridan found her in an agony of tears. Her beauty, her deep affliction, affected him. *He was also, as he afterwards said, afraid that the great power she had over me would be turned to make a breach between me and Fox*, against whom she was exasperated, and he therefore endeavoured to conciliate and console her." He told her that Fox had been misreported; he promised to correct the misimpression at the earliest opportunity, and to say "in his place what he, as well as Mr. Fox, and everyone else, must feel towards her."[2]

Most of us would prefer Grey's word to the Prince's, and especially in this long conversation with Croker, where he still treated his marriage as a fiction, and, as will be found, made further misstatements and confusions in a succeeding episode. But George throughout this narrative certainly held no brief for Sheridan, whom he assails, nor could he desire the reconciliation of the dead in alleging that Sheridan desired to prevent a rupture between Fox and the Prince. This motive may well have been one of those which now actuated Sheridan; though his enemies were ready enough long afterwards to impute the contrary. Whatever Grey may have said to Lord Holland—said years later, and years after that

[1] Lord Holland's "Memoirs of the Whig Party," cited by Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 205.

[2] "The Croker Papers," Vol. I., p. 293.

reiterated—much had since intervened to embitter Grey against Sheridan, and some of it without a cause. Lord Holland himself only followed the traditions of his house in sacrificing Sheridan to Fox, and where memories are at fault prejudices supply the gap. On the whole we cannot disbelieve that the Prince sent for Grey, but we need not believe the sequel. The Prince's story of how Sheridan came to act for Mrs. Fitzherbert is credible, because it accords with his instincts and the probabilities of the case.

Sheridan soon found the required opening. Newnham's motion had been fixed for May 4, but meanwhile, through the Duchess of Gordon ("Jenny of Monteith"), and by the medium of Dundas and "potations,"[1] Pitt and the Prince had come to terms—terms, it must be owned, not very creditable to the King, who saddled his subjects with the main part of the burden.[2] The Alderman had only now to withdraw his motion. He did so before hushed benches; but when he had done, a chorus of relief burst forth in which Pitt heartily joined. Fox, baulked of the party profit which all along lurked in the background, qualified his pleasure by prophesying that time would show whether their motion had been necessary or not. Rolle disdained to be pacified; he would be the first man, he growled, to stand up and stigmatise "any concession . . . humiliating to the country or dishonourable in itself" that might afterwards be brought to light. The moment had now come for Sheridan to restore harmony, and help Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince. We give his words as reported in the Parliamentary Debates, for these differ somewhat from the received versions. His language is couched in the same strain as several of the ingenious letters by which he was often to extricate the royal culprit in the future.

[1] Cf. Wraxall, Vol. IV., pp. 457—464.

[2] £161,000 in payment of debts, £60,000 for the completion of Carlton House, and only £10,000 out of his civil list. The Prince promised, and, it was said, the King tacitly engaged, that the country should not be called upon to defray any more such debts, and this was pressed strongly against him later on, when applications were renewed.

"Mr. Sheridan said he did not dissent from the wish that the conversation should not be prolonged. He did not, however, conceive that the necessity for abridging it arose from apprehension that it could terminate in altercation or difference of opinion. He could not but believe that upon that day there existed but one feeling and one sentiment in the House—a heartfelt satisfaction at the auspicious conclusion to which the business was understood to be brought." He would not enter into Pitt's distinctions. The sophist might have the benefit of the transaction so far as "the gentlemen supposed to be admitted to the honour of his Royal Highness's confidence" were concerned. In their anxiety to secure a settlement they gladly waived every claim. And "in truth the measures which had been adopted were the result of his Royal Highness's own judgment, which none but those who did not know him could consider as needing the aid of any other person's counsel whatever." In other words, the Prince had told a lie which had been endorsed. Sheridan then gracefully expressed the royal satisfaction at this happy ending, and having thus disposed of Pitt's interference and Fox's pretext, he turned to the matter which he had really at heart. "He concluded by paying a delicate compliment to the lady to whom it was supposed some late parliamentary allusions had been pointed, affirming that ignorance and vulgar folly alone could have persevered in attempting to detract from a character upon which truth could fix no just reproach, and which was in reality entitled to the truest and most general respect."[1] He complimented the House on disdaining to press an investigation which the Prince had courted.

[1] In his Speeches (Vol. I., p. 310) the words are given as follows:—"But whilst his Royal Highness's feelings had no doubt been considered on this occasion, he must take the liberty of saying, however some might think it a subordinate consideration, that there was another person entitled in every delicate and honourable mind to the same attention: one whom he would not otherwise venture to describe or allude to, but by saying it was a name which malice or ignorance alone could attempt to injure, and whose conduct and character claimed, and were entitled to, the truest respect." So too Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 209.

Sheridan, who had connived at the denial of the marriage, now praised the lady as a wife without impugning the veracity of Fox. Yet so skilfully was his tribute worded, so ambiguous was all of it but the praise, that Mrs. Fitzherbert was gratified, and remained grateful. Sheridan had contrived, without contradicting his friend, to efface in a great degree the effect of his assurances.[1] Yet reflection sobered the effect, for Lord Auckland's "Journal" notes that the "panegyric" seemed inconsistent with its context, and the caustic George Selwyn made a coarse application of a line from "Othello."[2]

The Foxites affected to resent Sheridan's action as a provocative against Fox. But before long Fox was in close correspondence with the Prince, and not ten weeks later he dined with him. Shortly afterwards, however, he quitted England to travel abroad, and thenceforward a coolness sprang up between them. Sheridan's tact was applauded, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was acclaimed and welcomed even more than she had been ere the gross affront had been fastened on her. The King's two brothers, their wives, and all the social leaders evinced their sympathy, while the "Feast of Reconciliation" at Lady Gideon's, where Mrs. Fitzherbert sat, a presiding goddess wearing white roses, symbolised the general sentiment.[3] Sheridan had made her peace.

At Frampton Court hangs a strange picture by Gainsborough with reference to this incident. The Prince with Mrs. Fitzherbert, Sheridan, Miss Stephens the singer, Mrs. Sheridan and Lord Radnor, are in a boat. The Prince supplicates Mrs. Fitzherbert for forgiveness, while she, her head half averted, appeals to Sheridan for advice. He argues with her on his fingers, and reconciliation is assured. Above, the heavens open, and Olympus is disclosed. Justice points to her scales, and the heavenly council nod approval.[4]

[1] Cf. Wraxall, Vol. V., p. 293.

[2] "Villain, be sure you call my love a whore."

[3] Cf. Wilkins, Vol. I., pp. 210—214.

[4] This picture may have inspired the caricature of a boat named *Honour*, in which the Prince, Fox (who steers), North and Burke are bound for



R. B. SHERIDAN, THE PRINCE OF WALES, Mrs. FITZHERBERT.

Miss Stephens (Lady Mexborough), and a lady unknown.

in the foreground sit Mrs. Sheridan and Lord Radnor,

from the picture (of 1787) by Gainsborough,

(in the possession of Algernon Sheridan, Esquire).

With such Elysian sanction did the true woman pardon her false lover, and reward the counsellor for his adroit homage to her virtue. But the party that had sought advantage from these manœuvres was damaged by the attempt, and it took shelter under the fine frenzy of Burke against Hastings to repair its errors and restore its credit. From such small beginnings do mighty issues arise.

Windsor. A breeze blown by Pitt and Dundas disperses her princess's coronet and feathers. Mrs. Fitzherbert, all forlorn on a rock, sits grasping a crucifix. The whole is entitled "Dido Forsaken: *Sic transit gloria Reginæ.*" The Prince cries, "I never saw her in my life"; Fox, "Never in his life, damme"; Burke and North repeat, "No, never." On the ground lie fetters, an axe, rods, and a harrow "for the conversion of heretics." Cf. Wilkins, Vol. I., p. 215. Miss Stephens was not the future Countess of Essex, but Lady Mexborough.

## CHAPTER V

### "J'ACCUSE"

### (1787)

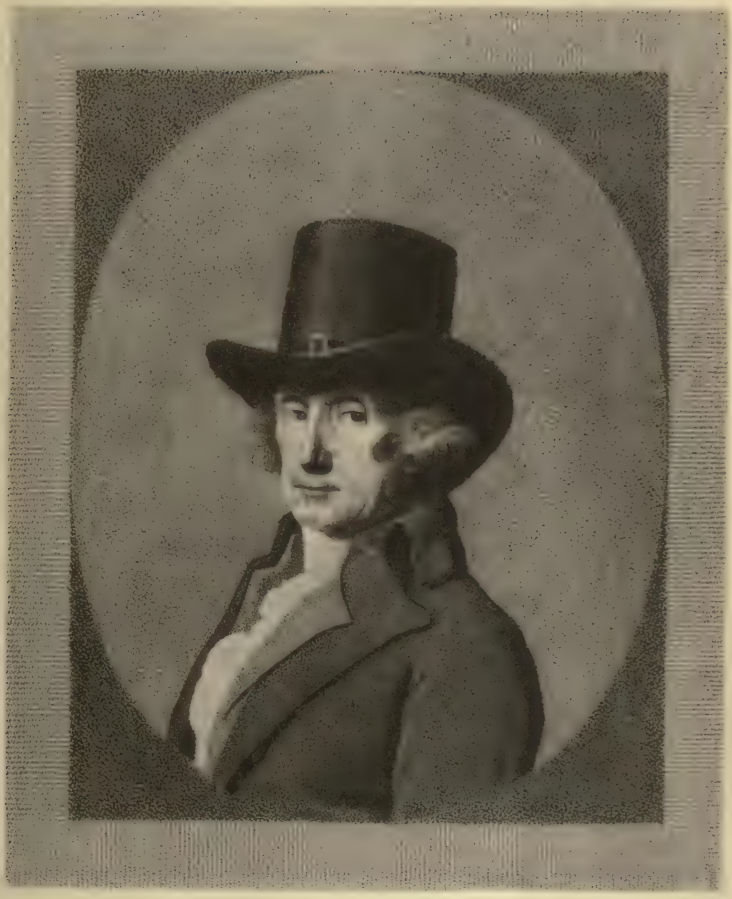
[THE PRELUDE TO THE TRIAL; SHERIDAN'S SPEECHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE BEGUMS OF OUDE AND THE PRESENTS RECEIVED BY WARREN HASTINGS.]

"The cause of all the evils has been despotism, which unhumanizes the heart of man."—SHERIDAN, *Notes for a Speech of* 1802.

DURING the whole of the preceding year Sheridan had constantly pressed the wrongs of India on the senate. He was already an examiner, though an irregular one, of the witnesses before the Committee appointed to prepare the evidence against Warren Hastings.[1] While he did not leap to the frantic lengths of Burke; while, if the rotten system could have been reformed, he would gladly have prevented an arraignment of the ablest proconsul India has ever known, he threw himself heart and soul into the fray of the business which preceded Warren Hastings's committal. The man was to be sacrificed to the system.

Was Sheridan sincere—as sincere as, in another century, the denouncers of Governor Eyre or of the "Bulgarian atrocities"? In that sense, he certainly was. It must not be forgotten that, wide as seemed the area singled out for impeachment, it formed only the outfringe of that vast sphere of public service which the great ruler had rendered. It left his most signal achievements untouched. Warren Hastings had early reduced chaos

[1] Among the Sheridan MSS., coupled with Burke's published Correspondence, are three letters from Burke begging Sheridan's attendance, and insisting on the importance both of a young Hindoo's depositions and the management of one Edwards, whose evidence was to be "arranged." There is also a letter from Fox to Mrs. Sheridan, asking her to contrive her husband's attendance.



WARREN HASTINGS,

from an old engraving.

to order. He had preserved public credit. At the dark hour when Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga, and Egerton capitulated at Wargaum, he had organised that wonderful march by Goddard from the banks of the Jumna to Surat, eight hundred miles across a continent with scarce seven thousand native troops. He had relieved Bombay and rescued Madras. He had worsted Hyder Ali and routed the Mahrattas. When French supremacy rode everywhere else triumphant, he had prevented its recrudescence in India. All these points lay beyond and above the charges which Burke framed with restless vehemence in collusion with Hastings's enemies, abroad and at home ; at a moment, too, when the Opposition majority had dwindled to a figure which made even Fox shrink from encountering a division. And within the scope of the indictment, it was felt that the man who had been confirmed in office by Lord North and continued by Lord Rockingham, who had never enriched himself, much as he had enriched others, should never have been denounced in the monstrous invective of Burke, or the stinging sarcasms of Sheridan. When Warren Hastings landed in England during the June of 1785, universal calm reigned throughout his dominions, and a large proportion of the natives hailed him as a benefactor. The disasters of years had been retrieved by the salvation of India; and, with all his errors, had he acted otherwise he would certainly have been impeached for the loss of what was then for the first time known as "the brightest jewel of the British Crown." He stood poor where most had battened on plunder; and though "The Rolliad" gibed at the bulse of diamonds and ivory bed presented to the King and Queen, it was known that he returned empty-handed. He was not among those who had "shaken the pagoda tree." Lord Macartney, his temporary successor, stated the sum of his own acquisitions at Madras as £40,000, and the figure was considered to be "very moderate." Moreover, Macartney himself had seized the Carnatic and refused to restore it to Mahommed Ali. Yet no one dreamed of impeaching Macartney. Lord Cornwallis, who started to govern India

early in 1786, governed it on the foundations laid by the recalled ruler.

But undoubtedly the exaction and rapacity common to the East had been used to maintain the desperate struggle for British predominance. The Company had urged Hastings to replenish its coffers, and the worst instance was that of the Begums of Oude, who, under the suspicion of covertly arming insurrection, and under the pretext of "resumed" demesnes, had been despoiled by their son and grandson, in the face of violated engagements, desecrated traditions, and tortured servants. Underhand bribes, too, had undoubtedly been received and queerly accounted for in the juggle of the Company's books. The East had not been governed by the standards of the West.

Burke, long prompted by his connections in Tanjore, and now instigated by the vengeful Francis, had worked up both the case and his feelings to excess. He had coveted the Begum charge for himself; it fell to Sheridan. It afforded endless occasion for vivid contrast, for that nomenclature "of Ormuz and of Ind" which lent itself to exotic eloquence. It was a drama, and in part a tragedy, although Major Scott averred that some years afterwards the Begums heard a translation of what Sheridan had spoken, astonished and unmoved.[1] The further indictment as to the "presents," which was also allotted to Sheridan, proved nearly as melodramatic, for the unravelling of its threads furnished a plot fraught with the same complexity of sensation. And both of these charges appealed to Sheridan's temperament. Women and princesses had been misused, bribes and money had been taken and extorted. Sheridan was chivalrous, and he despised lucre. His

[1] Cf. Scott's "Observations upon Mr. Sheridan's Pamphlet entitled 'A Comparative Statement of the Two Bills for the Better Government of the British Possessions in India' in a Letter from Major Scott to Sir Richard Hill" (London, 1788): "Let me observe that the Princesses of Oude, who heard a translation of Mr. Sheridan's speech read aloud to them in the month of July last at Fyzabad, were so exceedingly callous as not to betray the slightest emotion of gratitude, though they expressed great remarks of astonishment on the occasion."

indignation was heightened by being directed against objects the most repugnant to his instincts.

So far he was sincere, but he must also have known how largely political and personal considerations were involved. Of these he could not so easily persuade himself, nor can he be lightly acquitted. His party despaired. Pitt and prerogative sheltered the great governor who came home, a stranger to the political scene, and even, it might be said, to the political conscience. From the first Warren Hastings was unwise. He allowed his nominee, Major Scott, to overdo details; he disdained to rest his case on the large outline of his merits; he scorned his enemies and provoked their fury. The vindicators of India were to set up a system and a standard which have proved an immense boon to posterity, but a system and a standard unintelligible to the man who had to decide on the destinies of millions in a moment and at a distance which forbade communication. Still more alien were they to the mercantile and utilitarian standards of Leadenhall Street, which had been perpetually dinned into the Governor's ears as his mainstay for the sinews of war. Of all this Sheridan was aware, but, like the rest of his colleagues, he cast it to the winds. Nor can it be disguised that the chance of display must have tempted him also. Here was unrivalled opportunity for all the powers at Hastings's command: eloquence, raillery, dramatic presentation; a grasp, too, of facts and figures which few imagined within his reach.

Still another incentive was added during the speeches that preceded the motion for impeachment. Till May 13, 1786, Pitt had remained sometimes neutral, sometimes a protector of Hastings against the malice of his foes. His influence had interposed to prevent the supply of papers improperly demanded.[1] He had rebuked the rancour of Burke, who, even in 1784, had called Hastings "Haman Dowlah" in the House, and asserted that this combination of tyrant and informer had "extirpated"

[1] To take one of many instances, he interposed to prevent the supply of papers presumed to prove that jewels had been obtained from the Begums of Oude. Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 247.

a country and "reduced the whole to a waste, howling desert, where no creature could exist." He had shielded Hastings against Fox, who had presumed the extermination of the Rohillas, and the breach of a treaty condoned by a Government that immediately afterwards elevated Hastings to the Governor-Generalship of all the provinces. Dundas himself had then deprecated impeachment, but Dundas now aspired to control Indian affairs at home. It was only when it seemed probable that Hastings might receive a seat in the Board of Control that Pitt changed his tack, while Burke and the malign Francis nearly ruined their cause by their gross vituperation.[1] Indeed, on March 27, 1786, when the former moved the first charge on the Rohilla war, the motion was rejected by a majority of no less than fifty-two, and Burke then considered the impeachment as lost, and declared that he would move each separate head of his charge as resolutions that might remain on the journals of the House to justify him against the imputations of personal or party hatred. But on the day just named of the May following, when Fox moved the charge respecting the exactions from Cheyt Sing (the Rajah of Benares), a startling incident occurred. Pitt completely changed front, and he changed it on a quibble only worthy of an Old Bailey attorney. The speeches on the previous heads had presented a strong case; the evidence here was weaker and less conclusive. After buoying up the hopes of the man whose parliamentary adherents had powerfully assisted the Coalition's downfall; after dwelling on the malicious nature of some of the charges, and absolving Hastings of any design to ruin the Rajah, he amazed the whole House by basing his hostile vote, not on

[1] Francis's malice was of long standing, and everyone will remember that it was accentuated by a duel. When he, Clavering and Morrison were sent to India in 1773 to check Hastings, Lord Thurlow said in the House of Lords, that the greatest misfortune to India and to England was that the ship which carried these three gentlemen had not gone to the bottom. Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 61. Francis at first had even "curried favour" with Hastings to obtain the supreme post. Cf. "The Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife," p. 314. Burke, during the cross-examination of one of the military witnesses, had to be rebuked for his bullying.

the iniquity of fining Cheyt Sing for delaying a contribution of £50,000, but on the largeness of the fine, which amounted to £500,000. Pitt praised the brigand but took a grave view of the ransom, and in so doing he sealed Warren Hastings's doom. Sheridan now had Pitt on his side.

What were the minister's motives? Pitt dropped something in a letter about reconsidering evidence, but he had already had abundance of time in which to make up his mind. It has been said that, certain as he now was of the King, he could dare his displeasure and afford to join in a prosecution which would divert the Opposition from hampering his policy. It was the trail of the red herring across their path. Alison, again, has suggested that Pitt was swayed by the menace of Thurlow, who resolved, it was rumoured, that Hastings should get a peerage even if it were created by the Lord Chancellor's patent. These considerations may have occurred to him, but they are not the main key to the situation. Dundas is usually the clue to Pitt. Burke's rabid zeal had all along been playing the game for one who dreaded the chance of Hastings's home ascendency. There is great probability that in this instance also Pitt listened to Dundas.[1] But in any case his abandonment of Warren Hastings is the only real blot on the great minister's escutcheon.

I have said that Sheridan would have spared Warren Hastings if he could, though he was convinced as to the truth of the two separate charges committed to his care. Not only is this clear from his previous conduct and from the statements of contemporaries, but it is further shown by the preface to an unauthorised version of his Begum speech. "Solicitous as the public are," runs the passage, "to have a perfect copy of the most eloquent speech that was ever delivered in Parliament, their wishes must be in great measure disappointed from the very liberal determination of Mr. Sheridan to give no kind of assistance in reporting it publicly; a determination that does as much honour to his humanity as his oration does to his abilities. Having called forth his wonderful talents whilst in

[1] Lord John Russell in Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 256, and note, hints the same.

the double office of a senator and an accuser of the great delinquent, he now sinks the apparent though just severity of the public character in the humane sensibility of the private individual, and generously withholds that torrent of eloquence which must excite in every breast sentiments of indignation against the atrocity which demanded it to flow."[1] Sheridan's motives for suppressing the speech in its overwhelming entirety do him honour, and it will be remembered that he constantly favoured the middle course. "All political wisdom lies in compromise" is a sentence that remains in a fragment among his papers.

It has always been supposed that Sheridan's Begum speech in the House of Commons is one of the lost speeches of the world, and that only general impressions can be gleaned from professed accounts or reports of it. Luckily this is not wholly the case. The writer has lit on a printed copy of the speech which appears more authentic than its fellows, and is missing from the British Museum. It appears to have been taken from a shorthand report, which, though imperfect and free from the long details of evidence, preserves some of the flowers of the speech and a taste of the freshness of the whole. Its editor, regretting that Sheridan's "extreme delicacy" prevented him from furnishing assistance, vouches for the accuracy of its excerpts from one of the longest and greatest speeches ever delivered. Several reporters evidently contributed to its making; there is a shorthand note on the first page, while its clerical errors attest the haste with which it must have been produced[2] and the speed of Sheridan's

[1] "Speech of Richard Brinsley Sheridan Esquire, on Wednesday, February 7, 1787, 2nd Edition, revised, corrected and enlarged. Reported by a Member of the House of Commons. London. Printed for J. French, 1787." The motto is from "Cicero in Brutum," "Cum surgit is qui dicturus sit significetur a corona silentium," etc. Adolphus calls this "rather a narrative or review than a speech." Cf. Vol. IV., p. 256.

[2] "The Genuine Speech of Mr. Sheridan,
Delivered in the
House of Commons
On a charge, etc.
* * * *

utterance. Yet undoubtedly it does give some faint idea of the unexampled sensation caused by a speech uneclipsed even by the one of sixteen months later on the same subject in Westminster Hall. The shorthand report, however, of that second speech proves that the passages about to be cited by no means do justice to Sheridan. There are parts of the Westminster Hall performance so infinitely superior as to prove that the speech in the senate which caused an even greater sensation will never be adequately known.

That effect cannot be exaggerated. None who listened but were moved and amazed. Fox said when it was over that "all that he had ever heard—all that he had ever read—when compared with it, dwindled into nothing and vanished like vapour before the sun." Burke declared it to be "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument and wit united, of which there is any record or tradition." Pitt himself acknowledged that "it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind." It turned votes. Burgess, who attempted to gain a hearing afterwards, had to sit down; others were so wrought upon as to insist on a delay of the division, and accordingly Dolben moved the adjournment of the House

For
Extortion, Perfidy, and Cruelty
To the
Princesses and other Branches of the
Royal Family of Oude.

The Second Edition.
Faithfully Reported.
London.
Printed for W. Richardson, Bookseller
under the Royal Exchange."

The preface contains the following passage:—"Several gentlemen who took notes have cordially and generously produced them, for rendering this Report as complete as possible. They presume to call the result of their united contributions genuine with the greater confidence, that though much statement and reference is necessarily omitted, all the most brilliant passages are preserved in their native purity. Most of these Mr. Sheridan could not give more exactly as delivered."

until it should have recovered its senses. Mrs. Sheridan wrote in triumph to her friend Mrs. Canning, and Mrs. Tickell in the last year of her life swelled the chorus of exultation. It would need pages to chronicle the diversity of praise. For the moment all other topics were effaced. Nobody could talk of anything but Sheridan's speech about the Princesses of Oude.

On February 7, 1787, the House sat in Committee, with a Mr. St. John in the chair. Over five hundred members were present when, at midnight, Sheridan rose. A stillness succeeded in which a pin could be heard to drop. For nearly six hours he riveted his audience by an utterance exceedingly rapid though singularly distinct, and at the close his voice sank to a whisper. The House, for the first time within record, broke into applause, and Sheridan's friends rushed up to him and hung about his neck. Yet the speech as we now have it does not make the effect that Sheridan himself prophesied would endure in the revised speeches of Burke. Sheridan took no trouble to correct it. It is a mutilated speech; its bone and muscle have been extracted, and only the luxuriance is unshorn. Not an hour's reading remains of what would take, it was computed, eleven hours to read. And, above all, we miss the voice, the gesture, the manner. We do not lose the impression of a declamatory exercise which so often stamps the eighteenth century taste—a taste which, nevertheless, has excellences that may one day be revived.[1]

To explain the posture of events in Oude and Benares which the speech handled, it should be stated that by the treaty of Fyzabad, made in May, 1775, with Asoph-ul-Dowlah, then Nawab, but soon afterwards Nabob-Vizier of Oude, he was bound to maintain a brigade of the Company's troops at a fixed allowance. Asoph was the son of the Bow Begum, of Oude, and grandson of the Munny Begum. In 1777 these obligations were increased. The Nawab could not fulfil them, and his embarrassments drove him to oppress his provinces. He

[1] For some of these details cf. the authentic copy of the speech above cited. "Nearly six hours" are the words there used. In the *Morning Chronicle* the time is given as "five hours and forty minutes."

appealed to the Bow Begum for assistance out of his father's treasures, which he claimed as a right, and after his succession he succeeded in wrenching large sums from her on a covenant (guaranteed by the Company's Resident at his Court) that no more demands should be made. None the less, they continued, and so shameless were they by the beginning of 1778, that his mother resolved to quit her luxurious capital on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Warren Hastings, then paramount in the Council, ordered the Resident to protect her, and the pilgrimage was stopped. In 1781 Cheyt Sing, Rajah of Benares, had been instigating rebellion, and Hastings determined to proceed thither, extending his journey as far as Lucknow, where he placed his nominee, Middleton, as Resident against the wishes of the Council. The insurrection took place in August, and Hastings withdrew to Chunar to meet Asoph-ul-Dowlah, who had offered to concert measures of safety. Those measures proved to be fresh plans of plunder, and the pact that contrived them, signed in September, was the notorious treaty of Chunar. This treaty relieved Asoph of all obligations to support any troops but one brigade, and a regiment as Middleton's bodyguard. At the same time Asoph was to "resume" the "jagirs," or feudal estates, on condition of indemnifying their holders who had been guaranteed by the Company. No consideration to the Company appeared in the document, but a sum of £100,000 was in fact given, and by a secret understanding the Begums were to be stripped in one fell stroke both of their treasure and the jagirs. Though Hastings eventually violated the treaty, Asoph was not suffered to back out of his bargain. Through Middleton he was forced to resume the jagirs. With Middleton, in January, 1782, he surrounded the Begums at the palace of Fyzabad. But the zenana was a holy of holies, and without its profanation the treasure was safe. It was controlled by two faithful and aged ministers. These were seized, confined and maltreated till Asoph's indebtedness to the Company should be paid. Even then they were not released, for the balance of Asoph's undertakings for the previous year remained unsettled. In vain did the Begums protest that they had

surrendered the whole. Their servants were loaded with irons and starved till they had given their bond for the uttermost farthing. Nor did this absolve them. More than half a million had been wrung from them before the end of February. A further large sum was demanded. They were removed to Lucknow and tortured; but, since blood was not to be sucked from stones, their durance perforce ended on the second of September following. The persecution of the Begums, however, was pursued. To establish their complicity in Cheyt Sing's insurrection, Sir Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice of Bengal, was ordered to proceed to Lucknow and take affidavits. He did so in haste and under cover of a journey for health. The affidavits were added by Hastings to an appendix of documents supporting his record of the insurrection. Greed and revenge joined hands to replenish the Company's coffers. Such are the bald facts of a disgusting story. Let us pass to the speech which exposed these atrocities.

After a long and stately exordium deprecating a second defence raised by Hastings, brushing away outside rumours, and exalting both Burke and the majesty of the tribunal, Sheridan thus protested his own conviction:—

" . . . I profess to God I feel in my own bosom the strongest personal conviction of the facts charged against the conduct of Mr. Hastings towards the Begums of Oude. There are many gentlemen now in the Committee who have avowed to me the same conviction of his guilt. It is in this conviction that I believe from my heart that the treatment of these illustrious women comprehends every species of human profligacy. The statements in this case accuse the Supreme Council, under the direction of Mr. Hastings, of rapacity barbarous and insatiable, of treachery cool and premeditated, of oppression wanton and unprovoked, of breach of faith black, perfidious and unexpected, of cruelty unmanly and unmerciful. These are the crimes, dark and atrocious as they are, of which in my soul and conscience I accuse Mr. Hastings, and of which I have the confidence to say I shall convict him. The proofs are produced

and admissible to every gentleman in the Committee. Those who are ready to come forward as advocates for this complicated delinquency—and I doubt not there are many—I desire to watch me narrowly, and to challenge the severest inspection of everything I advance. I will leave nothing without the minutest proof, and wish for no credit but where I am supported by the evidence. . . . "

Hastings had brought forward a precedent of 1776 for the spoliation of 1781. Sheridan laughed such a plea to scorn as "the sanguinary gem to which he nobly aspired." Again, the sanctity of the zenana had been violated. Yet, "still he recurs to Mahommedism for an excuse, as if there was something in the institution of Mahomet that made it meritorious in a Christian to be a savage; that rendered it criminal to treat the inhabitants of India with humanity or mercy; that even made it impious in a son not to plunder his mother. . . . Where is the British faith? What has become of that awful sanction which has proved the consolation of so many nations, and the glory of our own?" And then Sheridan touched on the "resumption" of the demesnes:—

"I declare, Sir, from my conscience, that the system which Mr. Hastings then followed in his government of India may be termed a series of unparalleled cruelty, oppression, and plunder. He acted diametrically opposite to the command of Parliament and the East India Company; and the Committee of the Commons have frequently reprobated his principles. But says Mr. Hastings, 'Look not back to the records, weigh not the enormities of my past crimes. Listen to my own defence. I will prove that every article of peculation, rapine and murder, ascribed to my measures, proceeds from the antipathies of my enemies.' . . . Poor, unfortunate gentleman! He happens to have his tranquil moments annoyed by the cries of injured innocence! I protest that no man but the immaculate Mr. Hastings would have dared to come to the bar of this House, and argued upon the grounds of his innocence. After the proofs which I have already advanced, I am ashamed to trouble the Committee with more facts; and were I not sensible that a

very considerable majority of my auditors were already satisfied, I declare to God, Sir, that I would sit down at this moment without proceeding one single step farther. . . ."

He next dealt with the alleged sedition of the Begums, and the breach of the Chunar treaty :—

"The breaking of that treaty brought an indelible stain on the British character in India, and exposed to the world the perfidy of the Company's governors. Mr. Hastings, as a palliation of his guilt, affirms that the Munny Begum had conspired to exterminate the English. What a futile argument! These princesses had always reposed the greatest confidence in the honour and integrity of the English; and to prove the insignificance of this position, it need only be mentioned that three years had elapsed since it was reported this extraordinary contrivance had been agitated. Can any man for a moment imagine that Mr. Hastings would have suffered such a dangerous conspiracy to pass at that time unnoticed? Would he, whose penetrating eye discerned the least defection or dissatisfaction of the powers in alliance—would he have remained supine at such a critical juncture? The absurdity is too obvious to require an answer. . . . I now, Sir, come to the year 1781, when Mr. Hastings departed from Calcutta to Benares. His tour commenced on July 7, 1781, and is notorious for the origin of various illustrious facts. Mr. Hastings at that time, as related by Sir Elijah Impey, said that he had only two resources —Benares and Oude. What was he to derive from those two resources? Not the collection of a just revenue, not the voluntary contributions of people attached to the Company from sincere motives of esteem and gratitude, but the exaction and extortion of pretended debts and the plunder of the innocent. It was exactly like the malversation of a highwayman, who, in justification of his crimes, should say that he had only two resources—Bagshot or Hounslow!"

Sheridan went at length into the outrages. He exculpated the Nabob, and he expatiated on "the orders to Major Popham to divide the plunder" :—

"This is another instance of Mr. Hastings's philanthropy.

Notwithstanding the ardour of the troops and the skill of the officers, the difficulties which attended the siege against the castle of Beydegur protected it to November 23. By that time they had proceeded so far that a mine was ready to spring, which they hoped would enable them to storm the place. The only terms which she could obtain from a mercenary power, flushed with success and eager after treasure, were to be allowed fifteen per cent. on the effects in the fort, to reside in the country, or follow her son as she might wish, and in either case to be afforded protection. Even these terms, harsh as they were, . . . were grossly violated. The women who resigned themselves with confidence to the officers, whose faith was pledged to protect them from insult, were abandoned to the examination of the soldiery, who used them with incivility and rudeness, and even stripped them of their necessary apparel. This brutality was at least obliquely authorised in a letter from Mr. Hastings to Major Popham, where he hints his apprehension that these women might, from the gallantry of the officers, be treated with too much delicacy. Such a prostitution of character is unparalleled in the history of civilised nations. In case anything should occur so as to draw upon him the censure and reprobation of the world, Mr. Hastings had wisely provided himself against the contingency:[1] '*You know my necessities. I only take it as a boon, and shall make restitution when demanded.*' "

And then he turned on Sir Elijah Impey, Chief Justice of Bengal, and commercial traveller for the manufacture of evidence: "Figure to yourself the pretended infirm Chief Justice of Bengal undertaking a *little airing* of nine hundred miles for the *recovery* of his *health*, the greatest part of which he went post—a journey of the most imminent danger, which Mr. Hastings asserts had nearly destroyed his constitution. Yet the bold and adventurous Sir Elijah would brave every peril. But the sagacious Judge of the Supreme Court, resolving not to go unrewarded, accepted a place of £8,000 a year, which he enjoys to this year." The places to which he resorted for his health were, in the words of one of the Nabob's ministers, "a

[1] The word printed is "avengency."

speaking picture of famine and woe." Such was his "*little airing* across the country." What does he do when he arrives at Lucknow? He disgraces His Majesty's commission by commencing secretary and amanuensis to Mr. Hastings—and all out of pure friendship, as a man, forgetting his character as a judge. . . . Should Sir Elijah Impey, who was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, . . . soil his pure ermine by the dirty business of a pettifogging attorney, by scudding up and down India with a pedlar's pack of affidavits on his back, collected in every corner for the exculpation of Mr. Hastings?" Respecting the Begums' abettal of rebellion, he answered without any hesitation: "Under these circumstances Mr. Hastings wished to be informed 'whether the Nabob might confiscate their property.' 'Most undoubtedly,' was the answer of Sir Elijah; but here he says he gave his advice not as a judge but as a friend. . . . It is worthy of observation that when Sir Elijah was about to depart from Calcutta to Lucknow, he was earnestly entreated by Mr. Hastings not to go to Fyzabad. 'Go not to Fyzabad—go not to Fyzabad, the Begum being in actual rebellion, the people will destroy you.' Can it be admitted by the Committee that Sir Elijah, who was to travel like the wind, would protract his journey by going to Fyzabad, which was near two hundred miles out of his way? The position is ridiculous in the extreme. In fact, the whole was a mere pretext, Mr. Hastings being perfectly convinced that at that very moment there was no rebellion in the country, and that the people were well disposed to the English. But upon Sir Elijah's *return*, when Mr. Hastings had fomented discord and rebellion by plundering the Begums, *then* he advised the judge to call at Fyzabad, where he would have ocular demonstration of the result. . . . From whom were the affidavits obtained? Not from the disinterested, but from emissaries who were commissioned by Mr. Hastings to meet Sir Elijah or his associates, and inform them that the country was in a state of rebellion, and that from one end to the other there was nothing resounded but Cheyt Sing, arms, and revenge."

Sheridan proceeded to scrutinise the Chunar treaty and the present of £100,000 associated with it: "How and for what reason did he mulct the Nabob Vizier at this rate? . . . Four months elapsed before he communicated the matter to the Company, and then, unfortunately for him, the disclosure was made in language that betrayed his original design. He said *a sum had been thrown in his way of a magnitude not to be concealed.* Is it, then, a maxim with the Company's servants to divulge nothing which they can conveniently secrete, to square their honesty by the quantum of the temptation and to squeeze as much from the subject and account for as little to the public as possible?" As to the Nabob, Asoph-ul-Dowlah, "it was the price of his countrymen," and Hastings sold to him the absence of the English army. . . . It was agreed to withdraw all the English gentlemen and all the English army, and that at the very crisis when the most heavy complaints are made of a general revolt. The contradictions in these facts are gross and palpable. The finances of the Vizier are in a state of ruin. He acknowledges himself a beggar in every representation he makes on the subject. . . . Yet, under these circumstances, . . . the Nabob presents the Government with a *hundred thousand pounds.* The country, we are told, was then convulsed, . . . yet in the midst of these commotions . . . it is solemnly stipulated to withdraw the troops. . . . Here is treachery to the Nabob in prescribing conditions which he never meant to fulfil, treachery to the Company in violating the covenant in which he engaged to accept of no presents whatever, and treachery to His Majesty's subjects, whom, though then under his protection, he foully sacrificed to the emergency of the moment and the money thrown in his way. He was their friend while under no inducement to be their enemy. They might then harass and plunder the miserable inhabitants of Oude with impunity. The virtues of Mr. Hastings, great as they are, have their price." Major Palmer had asked nothing of Asoph, but Asoph had remarked that it was the custom of English gentlemen constantly to ask something before they went. "This libel on English

gentlemen Mr. Hastings coolly and gravely authenticates as an apology. . . . And the moment he pockets the money, turning proudly on his heel, he says to the victims of his treachery, 'Go! you are a pack of oppressive rascals. You have plundered this unhappy man. He appeals to me for redress, and he shall have it. The advantages you have taken of his distresses are scandalous. You have not left him a shilling, but he has given me a *hundred thousand pounds* to scourge you from his territories. Go! He shall in future be at ease, for I have promised he shall never see the face of an Englishman again."

He is always recurring to this Chunar treaty, which Hastings had evaded, and by his own showing defeated. The Nabob had been ensnared. "Is there anything in Machiavel," he exclaimed after his proofs, "any treachery upon record, any perfidy among individuals or nations, any cold Italian fraud you have ever known or heard of, comparable in any degree to a management thus black and perfidious?" He examined the circumstances of the jagirs, and he showed at great length from Hastings's own letters and statements, that his plea of the Begums' sedition was a fraud. "Throughout this intricate discussion," says his annotator, "no human recollection could do him anything like justice." Human recollection has perished, but part of his philippic against Hastings remains. He certainly did not spare his colours :—

"There is undoubtedly something about him either of parts or property which for a number of years has exercised a most fascinating influence. . . . But to try the truth of the position, it is proper to define the quality in question. In what then does greatness of mind consist but in great actions well directed; in executing the best purposes in the best manner; in doing most good by the purest means? False greatness of mind is indeed often mistaken for the true. It includes boldness of conception, strength of resolution, readiness of enterprise, and an utter contempt for the obvious distinctions of right and wrong. A mind of no principle, or the worst of principles, may embrace a daring and profligate measure and pursue it with alacrity and effect to a bad end. But a conduct even of this

black and abandoned description implies a certain degree of foresight though misapplied, and of wisdom though perverted. I affirm without apprehension of contradiction, that the public capacity of Mr. Hastings exhibits no proof that he has any just claim to either the one or the other species of greatness. We see nothing solid or penetrating, nothing noble or magnanimous, nothing open, direct, liberal, manly or superior, in his measures or his mind. All is dark, insidious, sordid and insincere. Wherever he has option in the choice of his objects, or his instruments, he instinctively settles on the worst. His course is one invariable deviation from rectitude. And the only trace or vestige of system discernible in the whole of a dozen years' administration is that of 'acting without any.' The serpent may as well abandon the characteristic obliquity of his motion for the direct flight of an arrow, as he can excuse his purposes with honesty and fairness. He is all shuffling, twisting, cold and little. There is nothing in him open or upright, simple or unmixed. There is by some strange, mysterious predominance in his vice, such a prominence as totally shades and conceals his virtues. There is, by some foul, unfathomable, physical cause in his mind, a conjunction merely of whatever is calculated to make human nature hang its head with sorrow or shame. His crimes are the only great thing about him, and these are contrasted by the littleness of his motives. He is at once a tyrant, a trickster, a visionary, and a deceiver. He affects to be a conqueror and law-giver, an Alexander and a Cæsar; but he is no more than a Dionysius and a Scapin. His very writings, though here he wants not for admirers, discover the same intrinsic poverty of intellect, are marked with the same mixture of littleness and pride. All his letters and minutes are dry, obscure, inflated and uninteresting, without point, spirit, simplicity or intelligence. He reasons in bombast, prevaricates in metaphor, and quibbles in heroics. So that in composition he hurts the mind's taste, as much as in conduct he offends every feeling of the heart." Dundas had said that "the greatest defect in the politics of India was that they were uniformly founded on mercantile maxims." "Mr. Hastings's administration

carried this sordid system . . . to its utmost extent. . . ." Here Sheridan stood on firmer ground.

"It was in this manner that nations have been extirpated for a sum of money, whole tracts of country laid waste by fire and sword, to furnish investments; revolutions occasioned by an affidavit, an army employed in executing an arrest, towns besieged on a note of hand,[1] a prince expelled for the balance of an account, statesmen occupied in doing the business of a tipstaff, generals made auctioneers, a truncheon contrasted with the implements of a counting-house; and the British Government exhibited in every part of Hindostan holding a bloody sceptre in one hand and picking pockets with the other."

And, next, he produced letters tending to prove that the Governor had investigated the resumption of the jagirs when he found the Nabob wavering. As for the Begums, "Their condition excludes them from almost any intercourse with the other subjects of the State." They were never in a state of actual rebellion, nor were they accessories, as the documents established. Hastings himself had owned, "the good that those old women did was certain—the ill was precarious." Sheridan demonstrated from the Resident's evidence that Hastings never relied on Sir Elijah's confused affidavits. After these details he resumed his rhetoric :—

"Who would not have resisted acts of such enormity? The treasure of these unfortunate women was their treason.[2] . . . The country was depopulated, famine was aided, and the bloodhounds of war were let loose upon the innocent natives. . . . Wherever the British army was removed, the downtrodden oppression sprang up, and called aloud for vengeance. The

[1] This refers to the siege of Beydegur. The £100,000 given to Hastings was in bonds.

[2] The speech as reported in Sheridan's published speeches, here (as frequently) contains an addition, "Their treasures were their treasons, and Asoph-ul-Dowlah thought like an unwise prince when he blamed his father for leaving him so little wealth. His father, Sujah-ul-Dowlah, acted wisely in leaving his son with no temptation about him to invite acts of violence from the rapacious. *He clothed him with poverty as with a shield, and armed him with necessity as with a sword.*" Speeches, Vol. I., p. 236.

inhabitants of Oude might be compared to a flight of birds. With fluttering trepidation they crowded together in the air on discovering the felon kite, who, having darted at one bird and missed his aim, singled out a new victim and sprang on his prey with redoubled vigour of wing and keener lightning in his eye. . . . I am utterly at a loss in what terms to describe the attack on the *zenana*. . . . The confusion, the uproar, the screaming of females, the barbarity of the troops, and the trepidation of the neighbourhood are unrecountable. . . . Let the Committee picture to themselves any of the British Royal Family thus surrounded, assailed, and forced to surrender their property and their servants, their bosom friends, at the point of a bayonet. To us at least who live in a land where every man's house is his sanctuary, where the arm of power dares not intrude, where the Constitution has erected an insuperable barrier to every encroachment or outrage, such an instance of violence cannot but appear monstrous and atrocious beyond all example or idea."

The Governor's excuses he demolished in order, transforming them into indictments.[1] There had been one whom he charged with treachery, though the butt of his indignation was actually "the patriot, the idol, the philosopher and the poet of Rohilcund."[2] But how could Hastings get over his violation of the trust reposed in him by Sujah Dowlah, the late Vizier, the father of Asoph? Sheridan denounced the proconsul as a false and fraudulent guardian, and before the plaudits greeted his flagging accents, he opened his long peroration :—

"It is thus that he sports with all the ties of nature and justice. . . . God forbid his idea of justice should ever be adopted in this country. . . . It is high time that this House should vindicate the insulted character of justice. It remains with the Committee to dispossess her of Mr. Hastings's splendid drapery,

[1] In analysing the affidavits of Colonel Hannay and other soldiers, he commented on the extraordinary "hearsay" evidence, one being that "fifty British troops watching two hundred prisoners, had been surrounded by six thousand of the enemy, and relieved by the approach of *nine* men." Cf. Speeches, Vol. I., p. 238.

[2] Hafiz Rhamut.

and exhibit her in her true majesty and form; not as a syren soothing the profligate in their crimes, but as the inflexible friend of the oppressed, and the steady pursuer of the oppressors, active, inquisitive, and avenging. . . . Need I state that this is no party question? I am aware what factions divide the House. Even prerogative has lately found its advocates among the representatives of the people. . . . The measures of every minister are supported by one class of men and opposed by another. But on great occasions have not the whole body of the Commons often laid aside all considerations of party and interest? . . . When the majesty of justice is to be supported, it is our duty, our glory, our interest, to be unanimous. Inhumanity is now before us in such a monstrous shape that we are bound to regard it as a common enemy. I trust we shall not relax in our pursuit. . . . I trust the Committee will step forward regardless of the minister or the influence of the Crown, or the prepossessions which individual interest may affect. . . . We are challenged by all the laws of God and man to relieve millions of our fellow-creatures from a state of misery and oppression. It is true we do not see the swarms of human beings who call upon us for relief. We do not hear the bitter lamentations of those who are ready to perish. . . . But in redressing their grievances, and reckoning with their oppressor, our relief will be magnanimous in proportion to the distance of the sufferers. Is a British Parliament to wait till its bar is surrounded with the screams of starving children, and crowds of helpless women shrieking under the pangs of hunger and wretchedness, before it vouchsafes the assistance of its power? . . . No! Let the Commons of Great Britain set an example to nations of stretching the strong arm of justice across the habitable globe in protection of injured innocence. . . . It is not given to us, as it was to the officers who had the felicity of relieving, to perceive and witness with unspeakable transport the ecstasy of gratitude with which multitudes were seized at the instant of deliverance. . . . The true enjoyment of benevolence is increased by the mode of conferring and dispensing its blessings unseen. The . . . omnipotence of a British Parliament

will be demonstrated by extending protection to the helpless . . . and weak in every quarter of the world. And the blessings of people thus rescued from the grip of avarice armed with authority, will not be lost. . . . Heaven itself will condescend to be your proxy in receiving the heartfelt gratitude of thousands. . . . I thank the Committee for their indulgence in a speech that has carried me far beyond the limits of their time or my strength, and move that the Committee, on hearing evidence and considering the said charge, are of opinion that there is sufficient ground to impeach Warren Hastings, Esquire, of high crimes and misdemeanours."

So much for the half-echoes of this famous speech. But one note for it survives among Sheridan's papers,[1] though for that delivered on April 2 following (about the charge of receiving presents), a mass of preparation exists. This second effort employed him long and laboriously, and his perseverance is the more marked as during the interval he spoke over and over again on Pitt's proposed treaty of commerce with France. Much of the manuscript matter deals with details, but one passage, highly characteristic of his dramatic manner, finds no place in the speech as reported. It concerns a present which Hastings received through Cheyt Sing's confidential servant, Buxey Sadanund, and it is written on the margin of the Governor's own printed defence; the italics are Sheridan's. Warren Hastings had urged that at the outset he "peremptorily refused Sadanund's *request*"; Sheridan wrote "but not his money." "Sadanund," continued Hastings, then "*wrote to his master*, and received an expression of submission, and a commission to bring the *two laks of rupees* as a present to myself." Sheridan affixes the words, "Proof that it was a known corrupt Government." "My reply," resumed Hastings, was that, "I cordially received his obedience, but must refuse his present, which I did." "A little coquetry," writes the comedian, and cryptically, on the top of the whole passage, "He could conceal the whole, of course; Post-Governor in 'The Critic.'" Of

[1] In a detached fragment about the presents to "English gentlemen," but the fragment proceeds to deal with Nuncomar.

the bribe, Warren Hastings went on to say, "I therefore suffered it to remain in the Company's cash as a deposit for their use." "False," writes Sheridan. "I informed the Court of Directors of the transaction, though I did not state to them from whom I received the money, a *neglect* which I should studiously have avoided." "Would he neglect his account?" is Sheridan's comment. Pages might be quoted thus dealing with Hastings's version of his dealings with Nobkissen, with Larkins, with other agents, and with other Indians. Here is a striking passage relating to Nuncomar (whom Hastings executed) in the notes:—

"No more charges appeared. Not a proof that no more money was taken. The spirit of accusation slept with Nuncomar. If it be said that he was fairly convicted at last, yet it must be owned, too, that he was falsely accused. The law did not enable the directors to become accomplices. A stouter vessel and a hardier crew." And the following touches Hastings's commerce with Nobkissen, a go-between in some of his bond transactions:—

"Curious that the sum he took just paid his contingency, and saved the trouble of transferring a balance. A record that I have obliged you in your distress will only operate as a hint to future claims and an incitement to future extortions. In this light I applaud the prudence of liberality. I applaud the cautiousness of his extravagance."

When we turn to the speech itself, we find it far better ordered than the Begum speech, more subject to that "system" which Sheridan charged Warren Hastings with lacking. Even as reported, the speech on the presents is a masterly composition. Warren Hastings's receipt of them is divided into two periods—that subsequent to the Regulating Act of 1773, which first brought the East India Company under some parliamentary control, and that preceding it. Once more he tried to analyse and impeach the delinquent's unequal character:—

"In this, as in the generality of similar instances where genius became racked under the consciousness of guilt, the ardour of

defence left its propriety at an irrecoverable and shameful distance. There was an infirmity—a weakness—a something not to be described in human nature, which almost insensibly led men to think less of the foibles or of the crimes of such individuals, whilst it could be proved they had not proceeded upon a principle of personal avarice; and that the increase of their own private property had not been the object either of their rapacity or of their oppression." He had at first hoped that nothing had been taken for private emolument. "But the more close and minute investigation which it was his duty to apply to the facts . . . had completely altered his opinion. . . . In reviewing the Governor's conduct, he had found it to spring from a wild, eccentric, and irregular mind. He had been everything by fits and starts: now proud and lofty, now mean and insidious; now generous, now just; now artful, now open; now deceitful, now decided; in pride, in passion, in everything, changeable, except in corruption. In corruption . . . uniform, systematic, and methodical; his revenge a tempest, a tornado, blackening in gusts of pride the horizon of his dominion, and carrying all before it."

The plea of "State necessity" next engaged him. This "doctrine," "this new and firm ally of self-interested rapaciousness, was not to be received on the present occasion. The point in question would not warrant the excess of his presumption when pleading in his defence the violation of a positive law. What he had done with the money so extorted was out of the question. If he had applied it properly, the measure in which he had done so might be put forward hereafter in extenuation of his guilt. But in the meantime the Committee was to look to his disobedience of orders, to his infringement of the Act of Parliament."

He retraced the sequence of causes which had led to the bribe at the treaty of Chunar. There had been "a manœuvre for the humane purpose of squeezing laks of rupees from the Nabob Vizier. This *generous* act was to assume the *curious* form of the refusal of an offer which the Vizier was *supposed* to have made. Mr. Middleton, the Resident, . . .

who had gone to such lengths, on a sudden became conscientious, and like a tick with a plethora of blood, became satiated with plunder—gorged and torpid. Even *he* wrote to Mr. Hastings that he could not think of accepting this offer (which, however, the Nabob had *not* at any time made), and Major Palmer was actually sent to *persuade him not to keep his resolution* of presenting Mr. Hastings with another £100,000; thus by a kind of ingenuity, by a perversion unknown in this dull climate, conveying a demand for money under the form of declining to accept it." "The present charge," he "begged leave to repeat," "was not perhaps of that nature which came home most effectually to the feelings of men. It could not excite those sensations . . . which a ruined prince, a royal family reduced to want and wretchedness, the desolation of kingdoms, or the sacrilegious invasion of palaces would certainly inspire. And though . . . within this dismal and unhallowed labyrinth it was most natural to cast an eye of indignation . . . over the wide and towering forest of enormities, all rising in the dusky magnificence of guilt, . . . yet it became not less necessary to trace out the poisonous weeds, the baleful brushwood, and all the little, creeping, deadly plants which were in quantity and extent, if possible, more noxious."

If these were Sheridan's words, his diction, it must be owned, was rather tawdry, his part overdone, and his mark overshot.

The impeachment was resolved and the committee appointed. Among the managers were Burke, Fox, Sheridan, Windham, Grey, and Sheridan's quaint friend, with the good table and lovely wife, Michael Angelo Taylor. Thus the process was initiated that persecuted a great man under the guise of a prosecution, and aggravated its tortures by prolonging them. It was to last seven years, and it dragged out its weary length at the average of some twenty days a year; two years more of suspense and anxiety must be added if we count the period of the preliminaries, and Francis boasted in Bond Street that even acquittal would mean ruin. It cost its victim £70,000, which, however, the Company refunded, and Warren Hastings was turned fifty-five ere it began.

Many years afterwards Sheridan met him under the Prince's roof at Brighton. Creevey (and he is not unsupported) relates how Cicero then shook hands with Verres, and begged him to believe that political necessity had overcharged the atmosphere that caused his fulminations.[1] We started by asking if Sheridan was sincere. It is surely more reasonable, as well as more charitable, to suppose that he was sincere in the sense indicated when he impeached the Governor-General, than that he was sincere when he sought thus to wheedle him. Certainly he had wished to spare Hastings before events drew him into the frame of mind and the study of facts which took the shape of persuasion. But, as certainly, Burke would never have grasped the hand of one who had long loomed before his distorted sight as an embodiment of evil. Burke's last recorded words were to remember his iniquities and to reopen his case in the courts of posterity. But Sheridan was more accommodating. His was not the fanatical fury of heated imagination, but the sentimental outburst of worked-up feeling. True, as a mere advocate he held his own view of a duty which has always been debatable ground. "The counsel," he asserts in one of his fragments, "is not only not bound to ask his conscience, but he is bound *not* to do it. He has a duty and a trust which ought to receive no aid from conviction. . . . What I am saying may sound derogatory, . . . but it is not so."[2] Sheridan, however, was a "manager," not a brief-holder, in this cause, and it is only fair that he should receive the benefit of our doubt. He was a partisan, and his diatribes were overdrawn, but in these two heads of the Oude outrages and the Presents who will say that many of them were baseless? They struck and stirred the national imagination long after they had ceased to electrify the land.

[1] Hastings then "with great gravity" replied that "it would be a great consolation to him in his declining days if Mr. Sheridan would make that sentence more public"; but Sheridan, says Creevey, "was obliged to mutter, and get out of such an engagement as well as he could." Cf. Creevey Papers, Vol. I., p. 59.

[2] Sheridan MSS.

And in those latter days it was Byron who gave voice to the general recollection :—

> " When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
> Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
> His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
> The wrath, the delegated voice of God!
> Which shook the nations through his lips, and blazed
> Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised." [1]

[1] Byron's Monody on Sheridan (1816).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TRIAL

### (1788)

> "Accomplished in himself, not in his case;
> All aids, themselves made fairer by their place,
> Came for additions; yet their purposed trim
> Pierced not his grace, but were all graced by him."
>
> SHAKESPEARE, "*A Lover's Complaint.*"

SHERIDAN'S crowning triumph was now to come. His speech on the Begum charge at the trial of Warren Hastings renowned him throughout Europe, and endeared him to a large section of his countrymen. It occupied four days, during one of which he was taken ill. It exists, as it was spoken, in the shorthand notes which were published and edited some seventy years afterwards.[1] We can judge of it in its purity, and taken as a whole, it is a magnificent performance, a varied tissue of passionate rhetoric and close reasoning where the embroidery seldom overweights the texture—a sustained condensation of intricate chronicle that runs to nearly two hundred and fifty large pages of small print. Many who heard it were moved to tears; Mrs. Siddons was among those who fainted; and the whole space of Westminster Hall was thronged with the most brilliant of brilliant audiences, including the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Orleans—Society, Art, Statesmanship, all were represented. The Bouveries sat with Mrs. Sheridan; only the Duchess of Devonshire, then at Buxton, proved conspicuous by her absence. And it was upon this occasion that Gainsborough, who, just before, had made Sheridan promise to attend his funeral, contracted the chill which brought on his fatal illness.

[1] "Speeches of the Managers and Counsel in the Trial of Warren Hastings. Edited by E. A. Bond (Assistant Keeper of the Manuscripts at the British Museum). Longmans. 1859." There are manifest errors in this transcript, and some of the redundancies are clearly attributable to the reporters, and not to the speakers. Sheridan spoke on June 3, 6, 10, and 13.

All the world crowded to the performance, and as much as fifty guineas was paid for the privilege of a ticket.[1] While some thought the opening too stiff and too much in the manner of Sheridan's father, not one, including Sir Gilbert Elliot, but admired the stately flow and the strengthening voice as the speech proceeded; while the wit interspersed in the lighter passages met with universal appreciation.[2] Fox, it is true, who had advised Sheridan merely to repeat the earlier rehearsal, used to say that Burke's style became vitiated by its influence. But this was no mean compliment, for the degeneration of Burke's style transcends the perfection of most. Burke himself was vehement in its praise, while Pitt maintained a silence only broken years later, when he sneered at "Pizarro" as repeating the blemishes of that historic oration. Horace Walpole, the fastidious, held the national decadence not irretrievable when "history and eloquence threw out such shoots."[3] To have achieved such success without repeating his first effort, to have avoided an anti-climax, is of itself a marvel. Nor is this all. From family letters and contemporary mentions, it is clear that the moral sense of his hearers responded as much as their minds or emotions. Mrs. Sheridan thus acquaints her sister-in-law with "the news of our dear Dick's triumph—of our triumph"—when it was still fresh in her mind: "It is impossible, my dear woman, to convey to you the delight, the astonishment, the adoration, he has excited in the breasts of every class of people. Even party prejudice has been overcome by a display of genius, eloquence

[1] Cf. Horace Walpole to T. Barrett, June 5, 1788. On the third day the peeresses rose at six and were seated by ten to hear a speech which began about half-past twelve; cf. "Letters from Simpkin the Second," p. 23.

[2] Cf. for one instance Storer's letter to Eden in Lord Auckland's "Journal," Vol. I., p. 212: "Sheridan's account of the rebellion was very good. He said it was raised by two old women, headed by two eunuchs, and quelled by an affidavit." Storer, however, noticed that at first "his voice was not powerful enough for the hall, and his manner of speaking was more like a lawyer's than a Member . . . , not to say that he mouthed very like his father when he acted King John." Elizabeth Sheridan, who heard him in the later proceedings, also noticed the resemblance to their father in his delivery.

[3] Cf. the letter to Barrett just quoted.




A Ticket of Admission to the Warren Hastings Trial.

and goodness which no one with anything like a heart about them could have listened to without being the wiser and the better for the rest of their lives. What must my feelings be, you only can imagine. To tell you truth, it is with some difficulty that I can 'let down my mind,' as Mr. Burke said afterwards, to talk or think of any other subject;[1] but pleasure too exquisite becomes pain, and I am at this moment suffering from the delightful anxieties of last week. I am a poor creature, and cannot support extremes."[2]

In truth it proved the triumph of sentiment. When Sheridan's father returned to England at the close of July, only to die during the next month, he was greeted by the faithful ex-servant Thompson, whom "Master Richard" had so often befriended. "Sir," repeatedly said the old retainer, "your son is the first man in England; you will find everyone of that opinion."[3] Sheridan's sister Alicia, too, who heard the close of a feat of rhetoric hailed as unsurpassed, expressed herself as "haunted" by its effect.[4] Nor was Gibbon's pleasure, when Sheridan on the second day lauded his "luminous" eloquence, marred by the wit's after-thought, "I meant voluminous."[5]

[1] This was on the second day of the Speech, when Burke said in a debate on the expenses of the trial, "Instead of resolving ourselves into a committee of miserable accounts, let us, like the Romans after Scipio's victories, go and thank the gods for this day's victory in Westminster Hall. As to myself, I have been too highly strained, and my mind is not sufficiently relaxed after the sublime repast of which I have just partaken, to sink my thoughts to the level of such an inquiry." Cf. Wraxall, Vol. V., pp. 133, 134; cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 73.

[2] Sheridan MSS.

[3] LeFanu MSS. Elizabeth Sheridan to Alicia, "LONDON, July 25, 1788." Directly old Sheridan was installed in his lodging, Elizabeth hurried off to Bruton Street to acquaint the Sheridans of the father's arrival and slight improvement in health. "... My brother," she writes, "seemed very much affected. His eyes filled with tears, and his voice choaked. After embracing me very affectionately, he hurried out of the room. Mrs. S. said he was *nervous*, but would return to us soon, which he did, and then inquired for you in the most affectionate manner. He spoke very kindly of my father, who would not let Thompson go to him yesterday, but I hope they will meet to-day." Old Mrs. Linley was also present; she sprained her foot in going out, and a squib was published on the occurrence.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] The passage occurs in the speech of June 13, and in a part dealing

The site was majestic with traditions. The vast hall had heard the cheers that acclaimed coronations and the sentences that condemned magnates. On the thirteenth of the previous February Burke had opened the proceedings with a speech which was in truth a history, declaimed to walls invested with all the pomp of power and the pride of pageantry. They were draped in scarlet, as the procession of a hundred and seventy peers, marshalled by heralds, and robed in gold and ermine, marched in state. The galleries shone with grace and beauty. The Queen and the Princes of the blood sat in their places; all the statesmen, all the lawyers, even the pedants, were present, and among the literary lights Miss Burney shuddered to hear the fury of Burke. The managers stood in dress coats with their bags of papers beside them. The accused, who might have seated himself on Aurungzebe's throne, pale and careworn, yet splendid in silk and his diamond-hilted sword, solemnly knelt down at the bar and prayed the protection of the peers against those his persecutors.[1]

"My Lords," began Sheridan, in compliment to Burke, "the great illustration necessary to your Lordships' information was given to you at the commencement of this business by him alone who was equal to that task—by him to whom the world owes the obligation of causing this embodied stand in favour of the rights of man against man's oppression." The war-note of the French Revolution already sounded.

He disclaimed personal feeling; he pointed out that the punishment on conviction for offences flagrant but not capital,

with the Company's devastation of Oude: "If you read all past histories, peruse the annals of Tacitus, the luminous page of Gibbon," etc. Cf. "Speeches in the Trial, etc.," Vol. I., p. 676. It is referred to in the rhymed satire of "Letters from Simpkin the Second."

[1] For the preceding cf. Alison's History of Europe (under date February 13, 1788), "The Letters from Simpkin the Second," and a most interesting account of Warren Hastings's demeanour in "Music and Friends, by a Dilettante (1838)," Vol. I., p. 152. Burke's voice was "high and shrill." "Hastings was the most splendid delinquent that ever appeared." After Burke had done, he said on his knees, "Save me, my lords, from these men, my persecutors." Macaulay's *locus classicus* on this scene is too familiar for citation. He calls Sheridan "the English Hyperides."

would be "no more than a splendid seclusion from the society which the culprit would then have been proved to dishonour, and a limited deduction from the spoils of immoderate rapine." He satirised the manufacture of Hastings's defence:—

"A number of friends meet together. And he, knowing no doubt that the accusation of the Commons had been drawn by a committee, thought it necessary, in point of punctilio, to answer it by a committee. One furnishes the raw material of fact, the second spins the argument, the third twines up the conclusion. While Mr. Hastings, with a master's eye, is cheering, and looking over this loom, he says to one, 'You have got my good faith in your hand, you have my veracity to manage. Mr. Shore, I hope you will make me a good financier. Mr. Middleton, you have my humanity in commission.' When it is done, he brings it to the House of Commons and says, 'I was equal to the task. I knew the difficulties, but I scorned them. Here is the truth, and if the truth will convict me, I am content myself to be the channel of it.' His friends hold up their hands and say, 'What noble magnanimity! This must be the effect of conscious innocence.' It is so received; it is so argued upon; it fails of effect."

He traced the long prelude to the proceedings, citing, recording, criticising, arraigning. He went through the engagements to the elder Begum and the younger; he saddled Hastings with the responsibility. He dwelt on his "mystery and management." He showed that the mouth of the natives was stopped:—

". . . It was thought the greatest infamy, as well as the greatest danger, in any one native of India ever to reproach the English with having received money. Hyder Bey states it as the last degree of infamy. . . . Another, Rajah Sing, when questioned about receiving a bribe, says, 'No; has not the Rajah Nuncomar been hanged? The Rajah Sing may meet with the same fate.' No; that foul murder—for no power in this land shall close my lips from giving it that name—*that* strangled every complaint, that closed every mouth. . . . To disclose was to ensure persecution, but to complain of it was to ensure death and destruction." He carefully examined all the attendants of the Chunar Treaty, threading his way

through a mass of complicated transactions; and then he once more rated Sir Elijah Impey, "this giddy Chief Justice," who had gone out of his way with the utmost expedition, in his anxiety to allay rebellion, to Fyzabad:—

"His answer is, 'To be sure it is out of the way, but it was a pleasanter road'—as if it was a matter of pleasure, a pleasant embassy, he was going upon. He represents himself as some cheerful schoolboy, running upon an innocent errand, wishing to choose the primrose path to loiter on the way and idle in the sunshine; whereas the business he was going upon was of the most serious, if not the darkest, grain and nature. He was carrying a warrant in his pocket at that moment for the accusation, for the condemnation, possibly for the actual destruction, of these princesses. . . . This must give one an extraordinary opinion of Sir Elijah Impey." The Nawab, when asked about the rebellion which was a conspiracy to dethrone him, says that he never heard of it. "Such was the punctilio of the country. A most extraordinary punctilio. The Nawab is a model for all the kings of Europe in point of want of curiosity." How odd, that the taker of these depositions should never have a word with its intended victim, or "with the minister who was to revenge the treason. Such was the punctilious etiquette of the country. But the most extraordinary etiquette is when he comes back to Mr. Hastings." He does not discuss the matter with him. "He had advised Mr. Hastings to procure this testimony for his own justification." It would only have been natural to have inquired into that testimony's strength or illumination. But no, he says, "Mr. Hastings never said one word of it." "Here Mr. Hastings stood upon punctilio as much as the Nawab. As he was the representative of a great king, he thought it was not right to be outdone by the Nawab. . . ." And, to crown all, Sir Elijah himself, "with an extraordinary want of curiosity, . . . never looked once at one of the affidavits." Nor did he know anything with regard to taking them. He only bore instructions for that purpose from Hastings to Middleton, and he troubled himself no further. "Whether a man swears once, twice, or three times, he does not know. In a tent, after dinner, anybody came with a paper

and put it into his hand. He sat dining with Colonel Hannay and the people with their basin and their Ganges—a miserable consideration to think of those poor people mixing the innocent superstition of their religion with the libations with which they were possibly drinking success to this foul conspiracy! What was done to them he knows not. He clapped them into his wallet and carried them to Mr. Hastings, and knew nothing about them till he was provoked into it by a promise not to look into them. Such is the account that is given . . . by Sir Elijah Impey."

With extraordinary grasp and infinite humour, he traced the ramifications of the bribe at Chunar, a present of which Mrs. Hastings retained ten thousand pounds. He stigmatised the accounts as the dodge of a practitioner who confesses a smaller sum to conceal a greater. The gift had been offered in bills, and into their mysteries Sheridan pried with the gusto of long acquaintance. And he thus gibed at the upshot: "So here at last, when the account of the present does come, we find it was not given by the persons by whom it is said it was given: not paid to the persons to whom it is said to be paid: not received in the way stated; and there is no proof that it was ever applied to the objects to which it is said to have been applied. These are the circumstances attending a transaction in which I contend that, if there is mystery or equivocation of any sort, there must be guilt, because a plain man meaning honesty, however he might think himself authorised upon circumstances of great public necessity to receive a sum of money, would take care that the circumstances should stand clear." Was it bribery or extortion? It was both—"gross bribery and rank extortion." As for "State necessity," he would show "the coarse and homely nature" of this man's "offences": "No, my lords, that imperial tyrant, State necessity, is yet a generous despot. Bold is his demeanour, rapid his decisions, and terrible his grasp. But what he does . . . he dares avow, and, avowing, scorns any other justification but the great motives that placed the iron sceptre in his hand. But a skulking, quibbling, pilfering,

prevaricating State necessity—one that tries to skulk behind the skirts of justice, . . . to steal a pitiful justification from whispered accusations and fabricated rumours! No, my lords, that is no State necessity. Tear off the mask, and you see coarse, vulgar avarice—private peculation—lurking under the gaudy disguise, and adding the guilt of libelling public honour." From such outbursts Sheridan passed with quick ease to dry minutiæ, and with a detailed investigation of all the affidavits he closed the proceedings of June 3.[1]

On the 6th he re-opened his indictment. He demonstrated that Hastings's original charge against the Begums of systematic hatred to the British had broken down. When an accusation was two-edged and one of its edges disappeared, what should be thought of the other? Hastings's avowed object was to procure money; it was not only improbable that the Begums should have conspired as their oppressor urged, but they must have known that such a plot must fail. If "wantonness in guilt" existed, it was to be found in Warren Hastings:—

"There is such a thing as a perverse propensity to evil that leads the mind of man to evil acts even where the perpetrator has no obvious motive either of interest or ambition. . . . I am ready to admit that. But all I request is that, where the attempt was improbable, where the success is impossible, your Lordships will at least look with a degree of jealousy to the evidence that supports such an accusation." He resumed his scrutiny of the affidavits—a process difficult and lengthy, but fully and lucidly performed. Hastings's charges against the Begums divided themselves into three heads—their alleged abettal of Cheyt Sing's rebellion, their excitement of disorders at Gorruckpore in the Nawab's territory, and their inflammation of resistance by the owners of the "jagirs."

"With regard to the first charge, which is a charge of direct actual rebellion, I do protest that in order to satisfy my own mind, . . . I have been hunting with all the industry at least, though not with the acuteness, of any antiquarian that ever

[1] "Speeches in the Trial of Warren Hastings," Vol. I., pp. 481—559.

belonged to the Antiquaries' Society, to find at what period the rebellion actually existed, and I have not found any one thing to guide me. . . . There never was a rebellion so concealed. We asked Mr. Middleton whether any battle was fought anywhere. None, he owns, that ever he heard of. 'Did any one man, horse or foot, march to suppress the rebellion?' 'None.' 'Did you ever hear any orders given for any troops to march or suppress it?' 'None.' The rebellion seems clearly to have died a natural death, though raised certainly for a most unnatural object. But if this rebellion really did exist, it is impossible to treat the idea seriously, and it must have been a merry scene when Mr. Hastings first conceived the strange, improbable fiction, when he first entertained the idea of persuading the Directors that they had entered into such a plot. It is impossible to know when and where there may not be a rebellion. While we are sitting here, there may be a rebellion at Knightsbridge of the most fatal tendency that ever was; for the celebrated account of that army which has given celebrity to that village was an ostentatious display of pomp and military parade compared to that with which this was conducted."

And then as regarded the Nawab's conduct, Sheridan reverts to his "never-failing testimony, Mr. Hastings himself." The Nawab had paid a visit of respect to his mother, escorted by a large body of horse. But so zealous had he been on a former occasion when he met the governor, that only one hundred attended his arrival. "*Ergo*, at Fyzabad he was going to suppress the insurrection *incognito*":—

"We do not mean to maintain the Nawab to be of the character of Princes who travel privately to learn fashion from France and liberty from England, not demanding the aid of State; but only that he went as he usually did go. . . . Therefore, with respect to these 2,000 horse, wishing to pleasure the Council all I can, they shall have every horse brought to the gates of Fyzabad—then what comes of them afterwards? Mr. Middleton owns that it was a visit to his mother; he confesses that there was not a single word said by the Nawab to him on

their parting that he had heard of any rebellion; and more, he confesses that after his return to Lucknow, he never once mentioned a syllable of this rebellion. Therefore the rebellion, if it existed at all, was over at that time, and not only so, but it was forgotten—an old, stale rebellion of a week or ten days, and quite forgotten. . . ."

Sheridan then re-applied his microscope to the evidence, and proved the flimsiness of the story that mutinous Sepoys had entered the Begums' service. He supported the truth of the princesses' own recital. He exhausted the whole subject of the "jagirs," and then he drew a harrowing picture of Oude:—

"If your Lordships look over the evidence, you will see a country, that even in the time of Suja-ul-Dowlah is represented as populous, desolated. A person looking at this shocking picture of calamity would have been inclined to ask, if he had been a stranger to what had passed in India, . . . 'What cruel hand has wrought this wide desolation? What barbarian foe has invaded the country, . . . depopulated its villages?' He would ask, 'What disputed succession, what civil rage, what mad frenzy of the inhabitants, has induced them to act in hostility to the beneficent works of God and the beauteous works of man?' He would ask, 'What religious zeal . . . has added to the mad despair and horrors of war?' The ruin is unlike anything that appears recorded in any age. It looks like neither the barbarities of men nor the judgment of vindictive Heaven. There is a waste of desolation, as if caused by fell destroyers never meaning to return, . . . who make but a short period of their rapacity. It looks as if some fabled monster had made its passage, . . . whose pestiferous breath had blasted more than its voracious appetite could devour." Major Naylor's evidence bore ghastly witness: "He says, when he crossed the river he found the poor wretches quivering upon the parched banks of the polluted river, encouraging their blood to flow—encouraging the thought that their blood would not sink into the earth, but rise to the common God of humanity and cry aloud for vengeance on their cursed destroyers." Yet this was a subject race that had risen against the cruelties of Colonel

Hannay and refused life from the hands of his rescuer. A fine outburst follows, one which Wilberforce must have loved:—

"This warm description, which is no declamation of mine, . . . is a fair, clear proof. . . . I say it speaks powerfully what the cause of these oppressions was, and the justice of those feelings occasioned by them. And then I am asked to prove why these people arose in such concert! 'There must have been machinations, and Begums' machinations, to produce this; there was concert. Why did they rise?' Because they were people in human shape: the poor souls had human feelings. Because patience under the detested tyranny of man is rebellion to the sovereignty of God. Because allegiance to that Power that gives us the forms of men commands us to maintain the rights of men. And never yet was this truth dismissed from the human heart—never in any clime where rude man ever had any social feeling, or where corrupt refinement had subdued all feeling—never was this one inextinguishable truth destroyed from the heart of man, placed in the core and centre of it by its Maker, that man was not made the property of man; that human power is a trust for human benefit; and that when it is abused, revenge is justice, if not the duty of the injured. These, my Lords, were the causes why these people rose." He challenged Hastings's "fictitious" causes as "an audacious falsity"; he tore up the whole catalogue of his defences; nor had he been deceived or deluded. He had been reckless and unabashed, cried Sheridan; and the orator proceeded to comment on his rashness in a withering invective, the latter part of which exhibits his peculiar powers at their best:—

"When he seems most earnest and laborious to defend himself, it seems as if he had but one idea uppermost in his mind—a determination not to care what he says; provided he keeps clear of that, nothing can hurt him. He knows that truth must convict him, and he concludes *a converso* that falsehood will acquit him; forgetting that there must be some connection—some system, some co-operation, otherwise a host of falsities fall, without an enemy, self-discomfited and destroyed. But he really seems never to have had any apprehension of this.

He falls to work, an artificer of fraud against all rules of architecture. He lays his ornamental work first, and his massy foundation at the top of it: thus, his whole building tumbles upon his head. Other people look well to their ground—choose their position—watch whether they are likely to be surprised there. But he, as if in the ostentation of his heart, builds upon a precipice, and encamps upon a mire by choice. He seems to have no one actuating principle, but a steady, persevering principle not to speak the truth or to tell the fact. It is impossible almost to treat conduct of this kind with perfect seriousness. Yet I am aware that it ought to be more seriously accounted for, because I am sure it has been a sort of deduction which must have struck your Lordships, how any person, having so many motives to conceal, having so many reasons to dread detention, should go to work so clumsily upon the subject. And I think it possible that it may raise this doubt—whether such a person is of sound mind enough to be a proper object of punishment; or at least a kind of confused notion that that guilt cannot be of such a deep and black grain over which such a thin veil was thrown, and so little trouble taken to avoid detection. I own that, to account for this seeming paradox, historians, poets, and even philosophers—at least of ancient times—have adopted the superstitious solution of the vulgar, and said that the gods deprive men of reason whom they devote to destruction or punishment. But to unassuming, unprejudiced reason, there is no need to resort to any supposed supernatural interference; for it will be found in the eternal rules that formed the mind of man, and gave a quality and nature to every passion that inhabits it. An honourable friend of mine who is now, I believe, near me [and here Sheridan pointed to Burke]—a gentleman to whom I never can on any occasion refer without feelings of respect; . . . a gentleman whose abilities upon this occasion, as upon some former ones, happily for the glory of the age in which we live, are not entrusted merely to the perishable eloquence of the day, but will live to be the admiration of that hour when all of us are mute and most of us forgotten—has told you that prudence, the

first of virtues, never can be used in the cause of vice. If I might take the liberty, I should express a doubt whether experience, observation, or history will warrant us in fully assenting to that. It is a noble and lovely sentiment, my Lords—worthy the mind of him who uttered it—worthy that proud disdain, that generous scorn of the means and instruments of vice, which virtue and genius must feel. But I should doubt whether we can read the history of a Philip of Macedon, of Cæsar, or of Cromwell, if we apprehend prudence to be discreetly and successfully conducting some purpose to its end, without confessing that there have been evil purposes, baneful to the peace and the rights of men, conducted, if I may not say with prudence or with wisdom, yet with awful craft and most successful and commanding subtlety. But if I might make a distinction, I should say that it is the proud attempt to mix a variety of lordly crimes that unsettles the prudence of the mind, and breeds the distraction of the brain; that one master passion domineering in the breast may win the faculties of the understanding to advance its purpose and to direct to that object everything that thought or human knowledge can effect. But to succeed, it must maintain its solitary despotism in the mind. Each rival profligacy must stand aloof, or wait in abject vassalage upon its throne. For the Power that has not forbidden the entrance of evil passions into man's mind, has at least forbidden their union. If they meet, they defeat their object—their conquest or their attempt—as it is tumult. Turn to the virtues. How different the decree! Formed to connect, to blend, to associate and to co-operate; bearing the same course of kindred energies and harmonious sympathy, each perfect in its own lovely sphere, each moving in its own wider or more contracted orbit with different but concentrating powers, guided by the same influence of reason, endeavouring at the same blessed end—the happiness of the individual, the harmony of the species, and the glory of the Creator. But in the vices it is the discord that ensures defeat. Each clamours to be heard in his own barbarous language. Each claims the exclusive cunning of the brain, each thwarts and reproaches the

others, and even while their fell rage assails with common hate the peace and virtue of the world, the civil war among their own tumultuous legions defeats the purpose of the foul conspiracy.[1] These are the furies of the mind, my Lords, that unsettle the understanding; these are the furies of the mind that destroy the virtue prudence; while the distracted brain and shivered intellect proclaim the tumult that is within, and bear their testimonies from the mouth of God Himself to the foul condition of the heart."

This striking excerpt did not actually close Sheridan's efforts of June 6, but it must stand for their conclusion here.[2]

On June 10 he resumed the thread, the tangled skein of the affidavits. In such complexities he showed extraordinary acumen. One of the problems was, where had Sir Elijah been on a given day, and Sheridan convicted all the parties concerned of equivocation. His analysis is long and convincing, but of necessity it cannot be repeated here. And then he returned to his pet battle-ground of Chunar, and proved equally effective in arguing that up to a point, Hastings had deemed the treaty binding. He showed also that money underlay all his engagements with the Nawab, and he trounced their correspondence as "hypocrisy and fraud." His minute and lucid examination of these intricacies was naturally technical and forensic. It demanded intense concentration. The strain told upon him, and towards the close of his long inquiry he nearly fainted, and Burke had to occupy his place. Fox, who led Sheridan out, came back to tell the Court that so unwell was his friend as to be quite unable to proceed, and therefore he trusted the House would indulge him by adjourning to some future day. June 13 was fixed for the termination.[3] And Sheridan, in resuming his speech and apologising for the delay, thanked the tribunal for their indulgence, while he assured

[1] Here a Latin quotation was introduced which the reporter failed to note down.

[2] "Speeches in the Trial, etc.," pp. 560—626.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 617—651. Francis applied "assafœtida drops" to Sheridan's nose, and of these "Simpkin the Second" made great fun.

them that nothing but a positive ability to continue "with that strength and possession" of himself "necessary to the exercise" of his duty, would have induced him to have given their Lordships "the trouble of this additional attendance."[1]

On the day appointed he recurred to "all the various shifts, all the unworthy tricks, all the quibbles, all the prevarications and all the direct untruths" that emerged from a collation of the public and private correspondence. He reverted to evidence affecting the Chunar compact and the bribe of a hundred thousand pounds, the wheels within wheels of which evoked the comedian's irony :—

"Your Lordships will, however, find that Mr. Hastings afterwards sends another agent to Lucknow, Major Palmer, almost for the single purpose of dissuading this Nawab—of finding some soft hour—catching him in an easy moment and dissuading him, circumstanced as I have stated him to be to your Lordships, from forcing this £100,000 upon him. Your Lordships will also find that the Nawab, when it was first mentioned to him, expresses the utmost astonishment, and declares he never heard one word of the matter. He declares that they had better have taken the country at once, for justice is totally out of the question ; and there are many munificent acts of the Nawab which he does not appear to have had any cognisance of. It does not appear that the Nawab ever heard of the first £100,000 he gave Mr. Hastings ; for Mr. Middleton and Hyder Bey managed all these matters with great delicacy. Your Lordships know that it is always considered as an increase of a favour when the person receiving it is ignorant of the person from whom the obligation comes. But they, by a deliberate refinement upon this delicate principle, managed so that the person conferring the obligation was ignorant of it himself." Sheridan then turned to the Governor's complaints against the Resident, Middleton, and he dealt with the elder Begum's letters. Hastings had demurred to her "peevishness at the most trifling opposition to her caprice." "She was a capricious woman,"

[1] "Speeches on the Trial, etc.," p. 659.

jeered the orator, "that had a strange objection to being starved. They wanted to take away all her treasures, her whole estate, personal and real; and her dislike to this—a dislike which a great part of the assembly I have the honour to speak before would have sympathised with her in—this is called an act of feminine displeasure and caprice." As for Sir Elijah's part, "we track him all the way in the affidavits. It is something completely ludicrous to contrast the vivacity and nimbleness of his motions with the gravity and seriousness of the business he is about. We know not what to compare him to. You hear him here and there clamouring for testimony, like the Ghost in 'Hamlet.' We are inclined to call out to him :—

'Well said, old mole! Canst work i' the ground so fast?'

In one respect, indeed, the similitude fails, for when this worthy pioneer made his appearance at Lucknow, though he visited, as he says himself, the Prince for the sake[1] of whetting his almost blunted purpose, yet he forgot the last part of the conjuration :—

'Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught.'"

The Company's maltreatment of Oude drew down a fresh flash of fire. Its agents had pleaded for reformation and protection. "War and slaughter" were the means :—

"This is the character of all the protection ever offered to the allies of Britain under the government of Mr. Hastings. They send their troops to drain the products of industry, to seize all the treasures, wealth and prosperity of the country. Then they call it *protection*. Like a vulture with her harpy talons grappled in the vitals of the . . . land, they flap away the lesser kites, and then they call it protection. It is the protection of the vulture to the lamb. . . . They never once think of using the words faith—honour—truth—gratitude—justice. No, nothing but the impolicy—the inexpediency—the loss of money. . . . I say, my Lords, the man who can fancy evil beyond this, his mind must possess a fertility of iniquity beyond all the

[1] The word printed is "purpose," but it appears to be an error.

mischiefs in the world since the entrance of original sin. . . . Your Lordships will remember that Mr. Middleton did not blush to acknowledge at your Lordships' bar that to the very last moment and hour the Begums did look for protection and for rescue from the English against the attempts which they attributed to the ministers of the Nawab." In proof Sheridan produced one of Middleton's letters, and then, "Mr. Middleton," he continued, "is by the blessing of God at hand for her benefit —at the very moment that he was dragging her wretched son to the walls of Fyzabad to destroy her." He scathed the violation of instinct in forcing a son to ruin his mother:—"If these are the general sentiments of man, what must be their depravity, what their degeneracy, who can blot out and erase from the bosom the virtue that is deepest rooted in the human heart and twined within the cords of life itself—aliens from nature—apostates from human feeling? And yet, if there is a crime more fell, more foul, if there is anything worse than a wilful persecutor of his mother, it is to see a deliberate reasoning instigator . . . to the deed. This is a thing that shocks, disgusts, and appals the mind more than the other: to view—not a wilful parricide—to see a parricide by compulsion—a miserable wretch not actuated by the stubborn evils of his own worthless heart—not driven by the fury of his own distracted brain—but lending his sacrilegious hand without malice of his own, to answer the abandoned purposes of the friends that have subdued his will. To condemn crimes like these we need not talk of laws or . . . rules. Their . . . deformity does not depend upon local constitutions, upon human institutes or religious creeds. They are crimes; and the persons who perpetrate them are monsters who violate the primitive condition upon which the earth was given to man. They are guilty by the general verdict of human kind."

He went on to instance from dates and figures the insatiable greed by which Hastings goaded his agents to increase their demands:—

"So he writes to Mr. Middleton, 'Stop your hand; here is £260,000 worth of treason. You must not think of coming to

a conclusion till we have got that.'" What had been Hastings's relation to Middleton? "I will own everything. You find character, I will find money—and money is his forte—you bear the sword, I'll carry the shield." How had he spurred his emissary, Major Scott: "You have done well, my trusty agent, in this, but you have not defended the acts—you have not said they were defensible by justice or policy. Give me the paper, puny profligate. My conscience is light; my character will bear it out. I will claim merit and applause from them. I will state that they are reconcilable to honour, justice and policy. . . . And forth these twin warriors sally to encounter the justice and indignation of their country." The "just actions" were evidenced by irons, and "the mild, meek Mr. Middleton wrote that he was 'sorry' that he could not quit the prisoners of their fetters 'for a few days.'" They were then "double-ironed," and one of the elder Begums was threatened with being forced from her palace. But at length "all craft is thrown aside. They seem to disdain the limping pace of fraud. They stand upon no pretences, they disclaim all appearances. They instantly answer, 'Then tell us where the treasures are hidden!'" "Oh, Justice!" exclaims Sheridan, "Faith! Policy! fly from this spot—though your temple and sanctuary—and do not hear that human arrogancy has charged you with such crimes." The Begums, too, found no mercy. Surrounded by guards, menaced by slaughter, they at last met with lenity from Middleton and his agent, who did "seem to admit here that it was not worth while to commit a massacre for the discount of a small note of hand, and to put two thousand women and children to death in order to procure prompt payment." The Bow Begum observed that her situation was truly pitiable; but nevertheless £650,000 more were required. The ravages went on; havoc and famine surrounded them. "The melancholy cries," wrote one of the British officers, "are more easily imagined than described." At last the princesses "did break out of the palace." They marched in melancholy array, the children in front, behind them the ladies of the seraglio, and behind them again their attendants." Relying on false promises, they returned to their apartments.

Then came the decision to drive them forth, and "the Sepoys were told to beat any of them who should attempt to move forward." These troops accordingly assembled, and, each provided with his bludgeon, forth they drove them by dint of battering in the zenana-doors. Women leaped from the windows on to the stones. Sheridan's description is pitiable and disgusting to read, and he concluded it by telling how "the elder Begum sent for the wounded children, gave them money, shed tears over them, and lamented the miserable state to which the family of Suja-ul-Dowlah was then reduced." Only by "a humane act of disobedience" on the part of Bristow the trusted servants of the Begums were released.

Finally Sheridan undertook to prove that for all these iniquities Warren Hastings must answer. He fixed him with every treaty since 1778, and, on broader lines, he made out that Middleton had but screened Hastings in protesting his principal's repugnance to the Fyzabad rigours. "I think myself more criminal than Mr. Hastings," had urged that witness, armed "with a sort of avarice of infamy." But Sheridan took Hastings to task for all Middleton's enormities. The agent had received letters of credence. He told the Nawab, he told the Begums, "Mr. Hastings is myself." The principal was not on the spot, but he was there by proxy.[1]

What were his orders? Were they "irons, fetters, famine, guards"? Not in so many words. Yet he approved, and a letter confirmed, "the Nabob's resolution to deprive the Begums of their ill-employed treasures." More than this, he directly required his instruments to execute his purpose; and Middleton owned that no other means could have been used than were chosen. Hastings might have stopped his ears for ever, but Sheridan showed that he heard of and sanctioned them. He directed that the Begums should lie at the "entire mercy of the Nawab," and before the worst severities had been perpetrated he frankly told Middleton that he would hold him

[1] Notes apparently referring to matters of the correspondence as well as about the Mahomedan law, Bristow's conduct, etc., exist among the Sheridan Papers.

accountable if the methods "failed of the end proposed." Nay, even afterwards, the "old men," he wrote, were "to continue in bondage, excepting only a remission of the irons, until the final liquidation of the payment." Later again he gravely informed Impey how nobly "the ministers" had supported him "throughout the business," and he flippantly added that "the Begum was only to be attacked through the medium of her confidential servants, whom it required considerable address to get hold of. However, we at last effected it; and by using some few severities with them, we at length came at the secret hoards of the old lady." The East and the East India Company had made him callous. "This," exclaims Sheridan, "is the language of the representative of the British Government in India to the representative of the British justice in India! Can it be so? Or is it rather the language of banditti in a cavern plotting the destruction of some innocent family in their neighbourhood?"

Nor was this all. The Directors had ordered an inquiry for further information. It had been stifled. And after Hastings had heard and considered the story of his impeachers and Middleton's explanations, he deliberately stated of the methods adopted, "I won't say that they are mine, but they are just, honourable, humane, and politic."

"This," Sheridan comments, "crowns the whole. This shows the monstrous falsity upon which his defence is founded. . . . And am I now to be told, when I have brought such proof before your Lordships, that when he gives an agent authority to awe, to force, to compel, to kill—when he inflames and pronounces dreadful responsibility—when he has communications of it, and says, 'I am happy to hear of it, and shall return with a delighted mind to Calcutta'—when he afterwards makes it a charge against his agent that he was not cruel enough, when finally he calls all the measures just, humane, and politic—am I then to be told that he is not responsible because I cannot prove the number of the lashes or the weight of the irons? Shall I be told that he was not the cause this noble tree was felled, because he ordered them to lay an axe to the root,

but did not bid them tear the bark—because he ordered them to tear out the heart, but did not order a drop of blood to be shed? . . . I say I have brought home these crimes, and laid them full upon Warren Hastings at your bar; that he is answerable for them to law, to equity, to his country, and to his God."

And the culprit had shifted the blame from his own shoulders to those of his tools and of his masters. He had thought "to procure immunity . . . to himself by proving community in his crimes." Sheridan read the correspondence with the Board and declared it riddled with falsehoods:—

"I think so far I shall have vindicated the Council, for they were wholly imposed upon. . . . We have an impression of such tyrants as Caligula and Nero, that, having been bred up to tyranny and oppression, having had no equals to control them, no moment for reflection, we conceive that if it could have been possible to seize the guilty profligates for a moment, you might bring conviction to their hearts and repentance to their minds. But where you see a cool, reasoning, deliberate tyrant—one who was not born and bred to an arrogant, fell despotism; who has been nursed in a mercantile line, who has been used to look round among his fellow-subjects to transact with his equals, to account for his conduct to his masters and . . . to detail all his transactions, one who never could fly one moment from himself, but must be obliged every night to sit down and hold up a glass to his own soul—could never be blind to his deformity, and must have brought his conscience not only to connive, but approve of it—this distinguishes it from the worst cruelties, the worst enormities, we read of. . . . This is a circumstance that aggravates the whole of the guilt of the unfortunate gentleman we are now arraigning at your bar."

Hastings had argued that the Begums alone were entitled to demand inquiry. "Let those," said Sheridan, "who estimate our duties at home and abroad—let them learn a lesson from this great statesman, this enlarged, this liberal philosopher." He begged the tribunal to turn from this deformed Indian idol, a vile deity "hewn from some rock blasted in some

unhallowed grove," to "the true majesty of justice here." And then came his brief peroration. He invoked justice.

"Here indeed I see a different form, enthroned by the sovereign hand of Freedom and adorned by the hand of Mercy—awful without severity, commanding without pride, vigilant and active without restlessness and suspicion, searching and inquisitive without meanness and debasement,—not arrogantly scorning to stoop when listening to the voice of afflicted innocence—and in its loveliest attitude when bending to uplift the suppliant at its feet.

"My Lords, I have closed the evidence. I have no further comments. When I have done with the evidence, I have done with everything that is near my heart. It is by the majesty, by the form of that justice, that I do conjure and implore your Lordships to give your minds to this great business. That is the only exhortation I have to make. It is not to exhort you to decide with a perfect clear conscience. . . . It would be presumption to warn you against that; I know it cannot be the case. But what I exhort you to is, that when you lay your hands upon your breasts, you not only cover that pure, sublime, and clear conscience, but that you do cover a mind convinced by a diligent application to the evidence brought before you. It is to that I quote the example of the Commons, to exhort your Lordships to weigh and look into facts—not so much to words, which may be denied or quibbled away—but to look to the plain facts, to weigh and consider the testimony in your own minds. We know the result must be inevitable. Let the truth appear, and our cause is gained. It is to this I conjure your Lordships for your own honour, for the honour of the nation, for the honour of human nature now entrusted to your care; that I, for the Commons of England speaking through us, claim this duty at your hands. They exhort you to it by everything that calls sublimely upon the heart of man, by the majesty of justice which this bold man has libelled, by the wide frame of your own renowned tribunal, by the sacred pledge which you swear in the solemn hour of decision, knowing that that decision will bring you the greatest reward that ever blessed the heart of

man—the consciousness of having done the greatest act of mercy for the world that the earth has ever yet received from any hand but Heaven's.

"My Lords, I have done."[1]

As he faltered Burke caught him in his arms, and he pronounced these last words with such grace and dignity, that they long lingered in the remembrance of their hearers. Alicia LeFanu never forgot the ineffaceable tones, while the old servant Thompson tried hard, but in vain, to give her sister Elizabeth some notion of their effect.[2] And as we moderns walk in Westminster Hall the lofty roof still seems to vibrate with the echoes of that memorable scene.

In these pages, from authentic sources, and for the first time, so far as the writer is aware, a faint idea may be gained of the great speech which established Sheridan's fame.

Sheridan's part in these transactions had not closed. On May 14, 1794, he spoke in reply to Warren Hastings's defenders, and the report of his speech is to be found in the shorthand accounts of the trial which we have used.[3] Though able and original, it bears no comparison with the main philippic, though it is notable for a stern reprimand that Sheridan administered to Law, who had insinuated what he could not support. It was florid even beyond contemporary vogue, and some of its tropes were scoffed at by the future Lord Ellenborough, and Plumer, the counsel for Warren Hastings. Notes remain among the Sheridan Papers for this speech of 1794, and there is a copy of Law's criticism annotated by Sheridan himself. Sheridan had declaimed in his Druryest manner about the sacrosanctity of

[1] "Speeches in the Trial, etc.," pp. 659—672.

[2] LeFanu MSS., Elizabeth Sheridan's letter to her sister from London, July 25, 1788, cited at the beginning of this chapter. Curiously enough, "Sheridaniana" gives the story of the servant as a joke, and this is not the sole instance of the correctness of that loose compilation's facts, and the incorrectness of the turn given to them.

[3] Vol. IV., p. 105. Mr. Rae has also reprinted it from Sheridan's papers in the Appendix to Vol. II. of his work on Sheridan. Smyth ("Memoir," p. 35) never forgot the sensation of Sheridan's rebuke to Law, who hastily quitted the tribunal. The audience was "breathless," and Smyth felt "hot and cold."

the zenana, where the Begums were "not immured but enshrined." Law (alluding to the pilgrimage) had said that it seemed "something singular for ladies who could not go to the Mosques or the Balls to be anxious . . . to go a journey of two thousand miles." On this Sheridan remarks, "Coarse raillery: a pilgrimage with the dead body of their son!" To another sneer of Law's, he appends the answer, "As I am sure it is not *Law* or Logic, I suspect it is not fact." Sheridan had also termed the zenana a "sanctuary"; in a simile he had spoken of "the title of a Saint," and he had satirised munitions of war as "relics" to be laid on an "altar." Against these hyperboles Law railed. He had never heard of such a "title," and how could "muskets, camels and elephants be described as relics upon an altar"? To this Sheridan retorts on the margin, "He had never had a Saint for his client. Far too poetical a counsel to try a trope at Nisi Prius—to indite a metaphor." "He treats me," he sets down on a separate sheet, "as if this illustration (itself a good argument) was all the proof I brought." [1]

Of the trial's issue we have already spoken.[2] It embittered Burke's last moments, and Warren Hastings lived to see a whole court rising to their feet in his honour when he appeared in the witness-box. By the Company's munificence he was enabled to purchase that Daylesford which had been the dream of his life—and he was a poet as well as a statesman.

Burke remained intractable and became daily more vehement, violent, quarrelsome. Even at the end of 1788, so wearied was Sheridan of his impetuous tempers that he told the Duchess of Devonshire in jest how much he wished that Warren Hastings would run away, and Burke after him—a *mot* that hit off the double situation.[3]

[1] Sheridan MSS. There is much more on other points.

[2] Cf. *ante*, p. 144. Only parts of the Oude and the Presents charges were proceeded on, and of the whole twenty articles of impeachment only four others were wholly pursued.

[3] Cf. the MS. Diary of the Duchess, transcribed in the Appendix to this volume. A caricature of the time exhibits Sheridan pushing the cart in which Hastings is being driven to execution. Burke attends him in the garb of a friar.

Hastings had short shrift, but a long ordeal. It had employed some of the finest brains of his time. Burke and Fox and Grey highly distinguished themselves, but the supreme success was reserved for Sheridan, whose name abides more closely linked to the trial than any other. None of the speeches would now thrill their audience as they did then; to us they often appear turgid and sometimes tiresome. Times, tastes, the critical faculties, have changed and grown. But, however inspired, the vision of higher aims for India has lasted. Warren Hastings was a pioneer of empire, a great, ruling Englishman, and he did his duty according to his lights. That there were purer lights than these in no way derogates from his signal services. That his persecutors magnified his errors, minimised his virtues, and applied a standard to his actions far above their political atmosphere, does derogate from their self-righteousness. None the less, those very inquisitors ushered in the dawn of a brighter day.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THROW FOR POWER

### THE REGENCY QUESTION DURING THE KING'S MADNESS (November, 1788—March, 1789)

> "My due from thee is this imperial crown,
> Which as immediate from thy place and blood
> Derives itself to me. Lo! here it sits."
>
> "*Henry IV.*," *Part II.*, *Act IV.*, *Sc. IV.*

SPEECHES in 1787—and many of them—on Pitt's commercial treaty with France, on East India affairs, on ways and means, public accounts, the tax levied on post-horses (a great grievance to Sheridan), on the debts of the Prince of Wales, on 'the more effectually manning the British navy" (one of Sheridan's hobbies), on abuses in the Post Office, on the Ordnance estimates, on the reform of the Royal Scots Boroughs —the only reformation that made progress: all these must be neglected, for space forbids. So, too, in this year of 1788, with Pitt's Declaratory East India Bill, re-explaining and re-confusing his original Act, as Sheridan did not fail to note in a pamphlet to which references have been made. His energies were indeed multifarious. He treated of the Mutiny Bill, of the Commutation Act, of the County Election Bill, of the "Petition relative to the Government of Canada." The wonder is that, with so much in hand, both parliamentary and theatrical, he could devote so much leisure to society. All these employments, however, must yield to the commanding part which he played in the strange struggle that opened in November, a struggle between the Prince and the Opposition against Pitt and the King.

There are elements of surprise. We have not to rely merely on printed sources or received accounts. Outside the inner sidelights which other manuscripts afford, the diary of

Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, for the first time transcribed at the end of this volume, reveals much that has hitherto been obscure. The inherent weakness of the Opposition through the jealousies and bickerings of their leaders, the curious shapes which the King's madness at first assumed, Sheridan's authorship of a famous document still extant among his papers but long accredited to Burke, the hourly gossip of that exciting juncture, are all mirrored in its pages. Georgiana rallied the Oppositionists, and Devonshire House was the *rendezvous* of their chiefs. From her connection, too, the Duke of Richmond, she could glean something of the hostile camp. As we read, the distance of a hundred and twenty years seems annulled, and we move and breathe in contemporary air.

The King, whose curt answers and suspicious bluntness gave him a phlegmatic aspect, was inwardly the reverse. Shortly after his marriage it had been feared that his brain was affected, and his thwarted passion for Lady Sarah Lennox was the cause. So early as May, 1788, disquieting symptoms revived. His feet and legs swelled,[1] and he had even spoken of abdication. The hereditary gout was thought to have settled in his head; but George turned his back on his courtiers and declared that whatever was the matter with him, it was not the gout. Since back-turning was his favourite posture whenever he was vexed, little was made of this for the moment, though some there were who rumoured that his wet-nurse had been a lunatic, or that quack medicines had unhinged his balance. During the summer he drank the Cheltenham waters, but no improvement ensued. His pent-up energy soon grew eccentric in its outlets, and his daily behaviour more than odd. He ran a race with a horse. He asked a Mr. Clements if it was he who had eloped with his old flame, Lady Sarah. He sat with the young Court-ladies embroidering, and made believe to play the fiddle. He told West, the artist, that he would teach him how to mix colours, and illustrated his ability by mixing them with his foot. He pulled off Sir George

[1] Cf. "Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot," Vol. I., p. 229.

Baker's wig and forced him down on his knees to gaze at the stars.[1] Poor distraught monarch! He showed unwonted sharpness. On one occasion he remarked that the Prince was dead, so women might after all turn honest. On another, when Colonel Manners appeared, he said instantly, "That is *good Manners*," which caused Burke to observe that it was a strange way for reason to revisit a man in the shape of a pun.[2] His queer demeanour was noticed by the ambassadors at the *levée*, but his courtiers still made light of it, and even pretended to have been the same themselves. Lord Fauconberg swore that all the world had seen him in a strait-waistcoat, and Lord Salisbury, that the King had as much sense as he had—which perhaps was true.

But gradually his real condition leaked out. He mumbled much about Lady Pembroke, whom he had long admired, and eventually he declared that she was Esther, while the Queen was Vashti. His eyes were affected. To see his wife he pushed a candle into her face and nearly set her on fire. Charlotte was forced to leave him. Dr. Warren, whom the King dubbed "Sir Richard Rascal," was summoned, ministers met, the Opposition sat in conclave at Burlington House. Fox, who had long been touring in Italy with Mrs. Armstead, was urgently recalled home, and to Sheridan the Prince turned for counsel during his absence.

George's ill symptoms galloped apace. At Windsor he sat dictating Cervantes and the Bible at the same time and with incredible speed to pages whom he afterwards created "Baronets and Knights of the Holy Roman Empire."[3] He talked for thirty-two hours on end. He howled and screamed and clapped

[1] He seems to have had the stars on his brain. Even in the February of the next year he told Baker, "Hush, hush! don't talk of Stars. . . . You know I am *Mopsimus* and don't like French mottoes." Cf. Elliot's "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 274.

[2] Duchess's "Diary."

[3] For these instances cf. Sheridan MSS., Mrs. Sheridan's Corr. The information came from Emma Hart's "Jack," Willett Payne, now the Prince's factotum. For him cf. a note to the Duchess's "Diary" in the Appendix.

the palms of his hands. He suspected his sons and deprived the Duke of York of his regiment. He made a page go to sleep as an anodyne for his own insomnia, and then immediately picked his pockets. It was supposed that he did this in order to find his keys and thus provide cash for his escape. He saw Pitt, who was much affected, and he raved of the money that he fancied due to him from his minister. There could be no doubt now of his lunacy, and when the stoic Thurlow hurried off to him at Windsor, he completely broke down at the sight of his stricken master.

Yet ere long Thurlow sat closeted with Sheridan. A Regency would be demanded, restrictions might be imposed, and though some were for a joint Regency by the Queen and her son, the son alone would be the natural Regent. In that case Pitt would probably go out, and what then would become of Thurlow? Even the most loyal of Lord Chancellors has to think of himself, and he told Sheridan that he was not a party man.

Fox returned on Wednesday, November 24. He had journeyed in eight days post-haste from Bologna, distracted by a false rumour on the road that his beloved boy-nephew, the future Lord Holland, was dead. He was deeply moved when, as he approached Paris, he learned also that the King was doomed. Exhaustion and suspense told upon his frame; he was thin and very ill when he arrived, and for a time he fancied himself dying. He talked feverishly with the friends at his bedside the whole day long; he could not concentrate his thoughts. But eventually he was removed to Bath, where, with inborn elasticity, he soon recovered.[1]

Nothing galled him more than his lieutenant's conference with Thurlow. This parleying with the foe made him suspicious of Sheridan's every step, for in any distribution of places, he was already pledged to Lord Loughborough, a "rat" on whom there was no reliance. Fox communicated his disquietude;[2]

[1] Cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., p. 300. He was not present during the later debates on the Regency Bill.

[2] "I have swallowed the pill," he wrote to Sheridan, "and a most bitter one it was; and have written to Lord Loughborough, whose answer of

but as a fact Sheridan had only taken a necessary precaution in sounding a man indispensable to Pitt's defeat. But wonderful to relate!—little more than a month later, Fox himself treated, through Sheridan, with Thurlow;[1] nor did he disapprove of a later interview between them, which left Sheridan convinced that the Chancellor was "a great rogue." Fox therefore had small cause to complain. What he really, if half-consciously, resented, was that, under the circumstances, Sheridan now had the upper hand with the Prince, who had summoned his "dear Charles" back from the delights of Venice and a pleasant pilgrimage with "the Lady of the Hill," to little purpose. Sheridan, the Prince exclaimed, had "played his cards well" and would never regret having obliged a man so sensitive to benefits. Mrs. Fitzherbert, too, still hated Fox, and this rankled in the breast of one bent on popularity. But the Duchess of Devonshire, looking back on the events which she recorded, and writing after Sheridan had been estranged from his party, owns herself "convinced of the honour of his political sentiments." She disclaims any charge of "duplicity in fact," but adds, "He cannot resist the pleasure of playing a sly game." And this she explains by asserting that a "natural want of judgment and dislike of consultation frequently made him commit his friends and himself." The inference on the lips of Fox's idoliser is obvious. Sheridan was not in leading-strings, nor was he bound hand and foot to his political patron; and as for "judgment," Fox's inferiority will soon be shown. Between both of them now stood the Prince, who coveted the crown. Two years earlier, Sheridan had withstood their nominal leader, the Duke of Portland, for opposing the payment of the Prince's debts. Yet, as letters attest, he had also lent the weight of his influence to counteract the insidious

course must be assent. . . . Pray tell me what is to be done; I am convinced, after all, the negotiations will not succeed, and am not sure that I am sorry for it. I do not remember ever feeling so uneasy about any political thing I ever did in my life." Cf. Russell's "Life of Fox," Vol. II., p. 199. The letter is also cited by Moore.

[1] Cf. the Duchess's "Diary" under date December 14.

hold which the Duke of Orleans had, and retained, over his brother-profligate. All proved in vain, however, and the facile heir to the throne let himself be encumbered with debts to French nobles and Amsterdam Jews. What could be hoped of one who, with all that "good heart" and superb fascination of manner which the Duchess extols, could drive about Windsor with his sisters and Lady Charlotte Finch, smashing the lamps, at this critical moment? In her words, it was only "giddiness," and, adds Prince Florizel's devotee, it should never have been talked about. But this breezy lad of twenty-five broke other things besides lamps, including hearts and promises.

Night and day Sheridan toiled, now in council with his party, now hauled out of bed near midnight to consult with the Prince till the small hours of the morning, now harried forth to meet him at Bagshot. Both his wife and his sister, then their guest, bear witness to his exertions and exhaustion. For days he was not asleep till five or six in the morning. He was the recognised intermediary of the Prince, the vizier of Carlton House.[1] "Sheridan," writes the Duchess, "is deservedly high in the Prince's favour." The Duke of Norfolk—"Jockey of Norfolk," as Sheridan named him—had lent him Deepdene, and his post-horses might often have been seen on the road from London to Leatherhead, or on that between both and St. Anne's, where he consulted with Fox. Fox was not too decisive. A characteristic letter of this period, from him to his lieutenant, remains among the Sheridan manuscripts:—

"Dear Sheridan,—I understand the meeting at Burlington House holds for to-night, and in that case I think you should be ready to state the motion. At least if you do not, you must have something to say instead of it. What, I cannot conceive.

"Yours ever, C. F.

"Tuesday. South Street."

The turn of the wheel had now come, and the expectations of the Whigs ran high. None of them except the magnates were rich, and most were embarrassed. The reports of the King's

[1] Sheridan brought messages from him to the Duchess.

critical state increased hourly. A Regency seemed certain, and they sat down to count their chickens before they were hatched. Many had to be provided for, and few would easily be satisfied. Already they began to fall out over the partition of the spoil, though not all were so eager. The Duke of Portland at first hesitated to take office: he doubted if his views on the royal debts admitted of leadership, but eventually he was persuaded. He met the Prince and the Duke of York with Fox and Sheridan at St. Anne's; they shook hands, and all seemed harmony. His Grace of Devonshire was constitutionally disinclined to accept anything. The reluctant Lord John Townshend—Heaven save the mark!—was meant for Chancellor of the Exchequer; all work was a worry to him; but Calonne, the French financier whom Burke misjudged as a genius, made out that the City favoured his appointment. And then came Grey's aspiration to the same office. *He* would not easily be put off. Sheridan could have had the post allotted to himself had he insisted. His declaration, however, in the Duchess's chronicle that he would prefer reaching such high office "by degrees" and when he had "proved his capability to the public," does him honour, and it is confirmed by Sir Gilbert Elliot.[1] Grey refused to give way to Windham or Pelham, and all of them argued and quarrelled about this appointment. It is a sorry spectacle, these statesmen squabbling with the jealousy of school-girls. Sheridan at least took a broader view when he urged that the Duke of Portland must retain his supremacy, and that the coming Government should be "a true Rockingham administration" or nothing. In later times Holland House bruited that Sheridan had stood out for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer to the detriment of Grey or of Townshend; but the Duchess's testimony dissipates this legend. It was also said that the Duke of Portland refused to head a Cabinet that should include Sheridan. There is no proof that he so acted, and if he did, it was because Sheridan now swayed the royal debtor. But outwardly he showed no

[1] Cf. his "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 261, which, however, refers to January 10, 1789.

aversion. On the contrary, he invited him to dinner, he apprised him of Lord Thurlow's movements, he begged his assistance in immediately conferring with Lord Loughborough, while, "to prevent doubts," he also forwarded the lawyer's opinion (which remains), signing himself "Yours ever."[1] Sheridan attended his councils, was on friendly terms, and paid him a fine compliment in the House of Commons. If the Duke objected on any score other than that of the Prince's debts, his probable objection would apply equally to the rest. Undoubtedly, even then, he could not be in full sympathy with the left wing of a party whose politics puzzled and alarmed an orthodox Whig. Even in the days of the Westminster Election, Fox had written to Sheridan, distinguishing between Burlington and Devonshire Houses, and protesting how gladly he would "exchange Dukes."[2] Portland was eminently cautious, and he was the party's paymaster. He mistrusted the reckless and moneyless, nor did many years pass before he quitted them for the haven of Pitt. If association with prodigals annoyed him, his repugnance would scarcely be restricted to Sheridan. How unsafe it is to rely on the after-twists of such gossip, may be shown by a significant fact. A paper remains on which Fox jotted down his list of proposed appointments. Sheridan was to be what he became in 1806, the Treasurer to the Navy. Burke was not to be advanced an inch higher, yet Lord John Cavendish was to have been Chancellor of the Exchequer. Grey was young,

[1] Sheridan MSS. Duke of Portland to Sheridan, "20th Nov. Past one." This instance is new; the other is alluded to by Rae, Vol. II., p. 93. For the dinner-party—"a most select party," cf. Elliot's "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 240 (November 26, 1788). Elizabeth Sheridan, too, writing from London on March 2, 1789, says, "Dick has been at all their dinners, D. of Portland's . . . etc." LeFanu MSS. At the close of his parliamentary career, Sheridan referred to the Duke of Portland's written testimony at this time in his favour; cf. Vol. II., Ch. XIV.

[2] Sheridan MSS. "Dear Sheridan, I am obliged to be at the Duke of Portland's to-morrow at two, at a meeting to consult about the expenses of the Westminster Election, so that my going to the tobacconist's, &c., is out of the question, but I hope you will go, for I am sure I should be very glad if we could exchange Dukes." This letter and the one just cited come from that portion of the Sheridan papers which Mr. Wilfred Sheridan presented to Harrow.

proud, and ambitious. He was not poor or improvident, nor would these drawbacks, or violence of opinion, have disqualified him with Fox. Yet Grey's name is absent from this paper.[1] Grey, like Sheridan, was prone to take his own line; he was favoured by the powerful Duchess, and for the moment he was still loyal to Sheridan—"determined to be nothing," writes the Duchess a little later, "unless Sheridan, Fox, or Lord John are Chancellor of the Exchequer." Fox himself would certainly have declined the drudgery of figures, yet for some reason he seems now to have excluded Grey. None, however, would argue that Fox therefore disliked Grey. In 1806 Sheridan complained that during those hopeful days of a probable Regency, he had been promised Cabinet rank in the future; and when the Regency intrigues were repeated in 1811, he invoked the precedent of his former behaviour as a guarantee for his then conduct.[2] He was justified, for he certainly had not pressed his pretensions. Now that the bunch of grapes dangled in full view, each follower of Fox consulted his own interest. They picked quarrels by turns; first Grey with Sheridan, then Grey with Fitzpatrick over Sheridan as one to be "consulted" but not "trusted"; later, Fox with Sheridan himself; and later again, with Lord Stormont.[3] And yet, in the thick of it all, Sheridan and Grey are to be found supping amicably together at Devonshire House. Ambition whetted their appetite and urged their disputes: small wonder that Mrs. Sheridan wrote how her husband, fagged to death, had "to keep the wrong-heads in order." No brief should be held for Sheridan, though, in this case, he certainly yielded his claims. But then no brief can be held for the others, who were

[1] It will be found printed in Fox's Corr., Vol. IV., p. 283. In another jotting (p. 285) Sheridan is designed for the Presidency of the Board of Trade, but Grey's name is missing there also, though Fox mentions him as a possible "Vice-President."

[2] From letters in the Sheridan MSS. and a speech already cited.

[3] As regards Fox's bickerings with Sheridan, the Duchess expressly ascribes them (on December 11) to "perhaps some little misrepresentations of what Sheridan previously did." Eventually the breach was healed; cf. the "Diary" under date January 4, 1789.

all in the same boat and all at loggerheads in it. In the end, the shore so delusively in sight proved a reef, the boat foundered, and the mariners made shipwreck.

On November 27 the King was removed to Kew. It is at once sad and ludicrous to read of his antics there. He danced a minuet with his apothecary in a new tie-wig which he ordered for the purpose. He tore two of his attendants almost to pieces, while he displayed some aversion to the Queen. Thurlow was deeply "affected" when George told him that he feared the dinner would be indifferent, since he had not "so much power as formerly." Lord Chancellors like their dinners, and venison was the way to Thurlow's heart. Meanwhile the physicians were split into two camps, Whig and Tory. Pitt, who at first called in Dr. Addington, the physician of his boyhood, to counteract the gloomy reports of the Whig Warren, now sent for Dr. Willis, a clergyman-doctor whose commanding eye "quelled his patients." At the same moment the King was reported dying and recovering, sane and imbecile; Lady Salisbury was elated, the Duchess of Devonshire depressed. So the tide of rumour ebbed and flowed while few gave a thought to the poor patient. Indeed, much more regard was paid to the doctors, an examination of whom before a Committee of the House Sheridan favoured. Fox held otherwise, but Sheridan carried his point, and when at length the Committee sat, seven hours were devoted to one physician.

The King's madness was his heir's opportunity, but that opportunity itself was the crucial question. Had the heir-apparent a *right* to the prerogatives of the throne during his father's disablement, or even a privilege? And if he had a right, was it enforceable against the House of Commons? Was the Prince a mere candidate for powers which that House could withhold or curtail? was he a mere pawn on the board? Again, even if constitutional jurists should establish a presumptive claim, would he be well advised in pressing it? The principles of the Revolution were to be tested.

The Houses had met on November 20, only to adjourn, as the Opposition wished; for delay meant everything. The Prince

had seen Pitt, who expressed great objections to any adjournment, whereupon the Prince replied that the minister must know the House better than he did. If, as seemed half likely, Thurlow were detached through Sheridan, Pitt's embarrassments would increase. Pitt was in no friendly mood. The Opposition attempted more than one ruse to gain time, and Pitt met them by demanding a fresh inquiry into historical precedents, which consumed weeks, and only resulted, as Sheridan said, in "a little bad Latin and worse French." The wit knew full well that none of the rusty parchments which he himself found time to explore would fit this peculiar case. It was all a trick to prolong debate till the Tory doctors should pronounce the monarch recovered. And unless the Prince received full temporary powers, or Pitt could be forced into resignation, the game would be up. Manœuvre must be met by manœuvre. Fox, unhinged and excitable, was all for pressing the Prince's claim as of right; but this, though history says otherwise, went sorely against Sheridan's grain. The Duchess certifies at this juncture that he stood for persuasion, not for insistence.

And now Queen Charlotte emerged on the scene. Burke said of her at this moment that she had only one virtue—decorum; and only one vice—avarice. In this there is some truth; but to the vices must be added a strong admixture of natural cunning, and to the virtues courage, and loyalty to her husband. She had a difficult game to play. The King's malady seemed fixed. The Regency problem was imminent. She mistrusted her favourite son, and she abominated his advisers. Her other sons she almost disliked. Pitt she feared. He might use this juncture to become practically paramount, and, for a time, might turn England into a virtual republic. What she wanted, if she could get it, was a joint Regency where she could pull the strings. Her ideas were wholly German, and German on a small scale. Court intrigues, personal interference, petty economies, were her resources. The Prince of Wales had scandalised the proprieties to which she clung, and by turns she petted and persecuted him. She was a most unwise mother, and she had long been accustomed to rule her consort. Of rule she could

not bear to be deprived. Plot and counter-plot surrounded her. The mad King plotted, Pitt plotted, Thurlow plotted, the Opposition leaders and the little court parasites plotted with a vengeance. She set herself to outwit them all.

On the first day of December the Prince, attended by the Duke of York and another, drove down to Windsor for the purpose of finding the privy purse and the jewels, secreted, it was said, by the King or the Queen. They were discovered at last in a place near a window. Charlotte, who was "wonderfully fond of jewels," "flew into an outrageous passion, reproached them, abused them." "They remonstrated, and at last got the better." The Prince returned to a meeting convened at Carlton House, but his mother never forgot this self-assertion. She kept her own counsel and betook herself to Pitt. The Prince sent the Duke of York to worm out the upshot of this conversation, and to tell her that unless she disclosed it "none of the house of Brunswick would ever join in her interviews." The naughty child had asserted himself once more, and she would never forgive him. War was declared between mother and son.

On the fourth, Parliament met. The physicians' reports were laid before both Houses, and some debate took place in the Commons as to whether the King's state should be discussed. The Prince was now dead against any restrictions on Regency, but this was counter to Sheridan's advice. The Queen had written a kind letter, and he fancied that all would go well; but that letter was elusive. Two days later it was rumoured that Pitt and the Queen had consulted, that, after all, she herself might be Regent.

But the great debate lasted from Wednesday, the tenth, to Friday, the twelfth, and the effect will be best conveyed by giving the gist of the whole without separating the stages. When Fox boldly asserted the Prince's constitutional right to the Regency, Pitt slapped his thighs, exclaiming: "I'll unwhig the gentleman for the rest of his life!" It was the doctrine of divine right. Fox afterwards explained himself to mean that the Prince had the *right*, but not the *possession*; that he

was presumptively entitled, but that Parliament must ratify the choice. This, however, was regarded as retractation. To the ministers' plea that the Prince's power was a trust, Fox replied by launching out "into fine Whig principles," and then Pitt moved for his inquiry into the precedents. Burke was beside himself. He assailed Pitt as a competitor for the Regency, he alluded to the King's condition in unbecoming language; indeed, it was even said that he plotted for his dethronement. Pitt at first refused to name Burke as one of the Committee of Inquiry, but eventually he consented. Sheridan, speaking (and ill-reported) on the last night, deprecated the assertion of right, the provocation of which he tactfully fathered upon Pitt. Such a theory, he urged, amid cheers, "would not conciliate, but, on the contrary, it might create dissensions and animosities." He temporised. If it was dangerous to assert the right, there was a risk also in provoking the claim. But, on the other hand, could it be held that the Prince of Wales "had no more right to exercise the royal authority during the incapacity of the King than any other individual subject"? Pitt bluntly replied that, however Sheridan might threaten, he should pursue his duty. His cool antagonist disclaimed intimidation, maintaining that he merely referred to contingencies.[1] And in his support it should be especially noticed that Sheridan had already written a letter for the Prince to the Chancellor, in which he dwelt on the fact that "pressing a decision on a question of right" was "personally injurious," and that to discountenance such a course "would be considered as a decisive act of friendship."[2] It was Fox who had stumbled into the mistake.

Sheridan thus shifted the onus on Pitt, while in truth he was much irritated at Fox's ill-timed precipitancy. Fox said to

[1] Cf. Sheridan's Speeches, Vol. I., pp. 431, 432, the Duchess's "Diary" under the dates, and Adolphus, Vol. IV., pp. 323 *et seq.*

[2] Sheridan MSS. The letter is referred to in Rae, Vol. II., p. 97, but he makes the strange mistake of fancying this to be the document which Sheridan wrote to "the Cabinet." That document, as will shortly be proved, was the "letter to Mr. Pitt."

him, "It is better to take the bull by the horns," to which Sheridan replied, "Yes, but you need not have driven him into the room that you might take him by the horns." The pair drove home together, and when they entered the coach all that Sheridan remarked was, "Well, I suppose he has *some* little right, has not he?" He was wise, yet Fox, who had given the cause away on this head, has continually been absolved at Sheridan's expense.[1]

The Duke of Richmond well said that Pitt had caught the Whigs on his hook and would keep them to it. In the end Pitt moved that the House should sit in Committee "on the state of the nation"—a favourite device when one side wished to hamper the other.

Then followed a fresh interview between Sheridan and Thurlow, this time with Fox's privity. The Lord Chancellor explained that it was now "rather late in the day" to discuss compromises, for he had pledged himself to support the limitations. None the less, he promised "to speak for the previous question" in the House of Lords. The sly veteran tried to sound Sheridan. He suggested that Fox's friend might undermine Fox if he chose, and at this Sheridan waxed naturally indignant. In the course of his conversation, however, he did betray one of Pitt's proposals, namely, that for six months the Queen alone should control the household, and he tried to minimise the matter on the score that mother and son were at length reconciled. Sheridan then reminded him of the diamonds and the squabbles about them, nor could Thurlow deny that Charlotte was "a termagant." What would happen, he asked, if the Prince declined all restrictions? Thurlow answered that Parliament would appoint Lords Justices, and Sheridan retorted with, "But what will become of your head when he is King?" Thurlow replied, "You may hang the Chancellor, but you cannot alter the law." Eventually, however, he agreed. Practicable restrictions were discussed. Fox, the extreme,

[1] The Duchess adds in her "Diary," "Sheridan and Grey resolved to go through with Fox's principle of right, but in their hearts don't quite agree, and are sorry it has come on."

wanted none, but Sheridan favoured a six months' limit on the creation of peers and lords of the bedchamber. The main object of all, he added, must be to preserve the *status quo* if the King recovered; if he did not, his heir would reign. And with respect to these very restrictions, he hinted that the fair Georgiana herself might win over even the most obdurate. The old courtier gallantly answered that "she would have been a powerful, indeed almost an irresistible advocate"; his portentous bow can be imagined.[1] Altogether Thurlow resembled the amorous Lord Chancellor in "Iolanthe," and Sheridan happily summed up Pitt's censure of the Prince's readiness to take him over in event of a Regency as a crowning compliment to his character. Pitt, he said, considered the present Lord Chancellor such an enthusiast for "the successors of existing ministers, that he was willing to remain in office notwithstanding his present co-partners were dismissed."[2]

While this barter proceeded, it is touching to glance at the poor monarch, secluded at Kew, proposing a match between one of his keepers and that fat, awful Madame Schwellenberg, the future court-bully of Frances Burney; cowed by the domineering Willis, who brandished the strait-waistcoat before him; clasping the little Princess Emily tight in his arms till they brought her mother to him. The mad monarch is a finer figure than the sordid hucksters around him.

Thurlow had no intention of keeping his word, though the Prince still pinned his hopes on that perfidy. During the debate in the Lords, before a crowded House and with the Duke of York as his brother's spokesman, "When I forget my King," exclaimed the impenitent Thurlow, "may my God forget me!"[3] The Prince's sentiments, delivered by the Duke of

[1] Cf. the "Diary" under date December 14. Among the Sheridan MSS. are four letters from Thurlow to Sheridan of the first week in December regarding interviews. A caricature of the time depicts Thurlow and others emulating the Prince's bow.

[2] Speech on the Regency Restrictions of February 7, 1789, Speeches, Vol. I., p. 457.

[3] Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 332. The caustic comments by Burke and Wilkes have been already related. Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 165.

York, were entirely what Sheridan wished, and he probably framed them. They urged no claim of right: "he understood too well the sacred principles which seated the House of Brunswick on the throne ever to assume or exercise any power, whatever might be his claim, unless derived from the will of the people, expressed by their Lordships in Parliament."[1] Inwardly, however, the would-be Regent was agitated. His cause trembled in the scale, and it was gossiped that if Pitt were forced to retire, the City would pension him.

Next evening Pitt brought forward three resolutions, before the House in Committee. They were to the effect that since the King was now incapacitated from transacting public business, it was "the right and duty" of the Lords and Commons to provide for the deficiency in the legislature according to the emergency, and, further, that the two Houses should decide on the means. He ignored the Prince's right, and proposed that to Parliament for the time being should be delegated the power of affixing the Great Seal to acts of the legislature. Fox threw himself with ardour into the debate, and made what his Duchess called a "glorious" speech. He said that Pitt's motives were purely personal. He re-emphasised his argument of the Prince's right, he urged that it suited the ambitious minister to distress the successor, and he sought to expose him as a would-be dictator much as he had done in the tempestuous times of the India Bill. Sixty-four votes, however, gave Pitt a victory aided by the "middle party," who now sat on the fence, and by that section of Northites and Shelburneites which was nicknamed "the armed neutrality." Lansdowne thundered about "the rights of the people" in the House of Lords, and six days later Burke upheld Fox in a torrent of eloquence. "If we are to fight against the Crown," urged the tried assailer of prerogative, "let us fight against it fairly. When the monarch is seated on the throne, the contest may be fair; then we act manfully; but what is to be done when the Crown is in a *'deliquium'*?" And then he fell

[1] Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 332.

savagely upon Thurlow, and his misuse of the Great Seal: "We are told to take a man with a large, black brow and a big wig; he is a fit person. Trust none of the royal family, for they will all rob the Crown because they are the relatives of the Sovereign; and in order to fix a proper and legal sanction upon our proceedings, we will give a fictitious consent to our own acts." He did not approve of robbery, yet any sort of robbery was preferable to forgery. "I have given my allegiance," he added, "to the House of Hanover. I worship the Constitution, but I will not worship Priapus." And he concluded by quoting Macbeth:—

> "Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown
> And put a barren sceptre in my grip,
> Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,
> No son of mine succeeding."

"Do not let me," he made the King exclaim, "see a black browed phantom on my throne!"[1]

Sheridan spoke also, but he could not vie with Burke, nor is his full speech extant. He addressed himself ironically to the proposed limitations. Pitt had urged that the powers of prerogative might be abused, and had proudly pointed to his own conduct; Sheridan taunted him with these precedents. "'Recollect,' he might have said, 'under what circumstances I dissolved, how lavish I have been of the honours of the peerage, and say that the powers of the prerogative may not be abused, if you can.' The right honourable gentleman observes that the Prince may dissolve the Parliament without consenting to limitations. The first act of his Regency ought to be to consent to limitations. And was there a man who believed that he would not? But in imposing restrictions some delicacy was requisite, for every restriction that was not necessary was not a limitation but an insult. Was the right honourable gentleman in such haste to impose restrictions because he feared that he could not carry the limitations which he meant to propose, unless he were a minister? . . . What

[1] Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., pp. 334—336.

provision was made if the Prince should reject a Regency on the right honourable gentleman's terms? Supposing him to accept, would he repudiate as Regent the very restrictions under which he would consent to take the trust? Would any one advise him to say, 'I accept the limitations you propose, which I think are improper, and which I hope Parliament will annul'?"[1] The Prince was still in ignorance. On that same evening of December the twenty-second he had asked Pitt what the plan was to be. He had already received the first of two "insolent" messages from Pitt. The second, which a footman brought on the thirtieth,[2] at length acquainted him with the nature of the restrictions. The King's person, the whole household and its patronage were entrusted to the Queen. The disposal of the King's property (otherwise than the renewal of leases) was removed from the Regent's power. He might not grant any office in reversion save those in His Majesty's pleasure, no pension or other office except those for life or during good behaviour; nor might he bestow a peerage on any but non-minors of the royal family. If, unfortunately, the King's illness should last longer than it was hoped, these provisions would be subject to parliamentary reconsideration.[3] Sheridan's own view of the situation best appears from a powerful note for one of his speeches. He distinguished between the King's *political* capacity and his *natural*. He held that the King's madness did not invalidate his *political* capacity, but that he must be *represented* in order to preserve monarchy and empower Parliament. None but the heir-apparent could represent him, unless it could be contended that the gift of the Crown reverted absolutely to the people.[4]

[1] Speeches, Vol. I., p. 434.

[2] Sheridan MSS., Mrs. Sheridan's Corr.

[3] Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 341. The peerage clause was a special grievance, and in a speech of January 22, 1789, Sheridan laughed at Pitt's excuse for his own excessive creations, that they were due to the growing commerce of the country.

[4] Sheridan MSS. "If this be a fiction," he says, "consider how many are necessary—the King as the redresser of private wrongs. . . . To establish the right of hereditary succession, how little our Law considers the

A deliberate answer was imperative, but precision of fence exceeded the Prince's powers. Lengthy letters, it is true, and on trivial occasions, were a known foible of the House of Brunswick. Stacks of paper to explain the obvious and excuse the indefensible seemed congenital in a family that found pleasure in taking offence. But a reply like this required study and *finesse*, and the Prince liked to shut up his myrmidons in separate rooms, each engaged on his secret business. He now employed Loughborough and Burke, afterwards Fox and Elliot.[1] Sheridan told the Duchess that Loughborough's letter was "all ice and snow," Burke's "all fire and tow," and that out of the two *he* was expected to compose a compound. Burke's letter, the Prince assured Croker long afterwards, took two hours to read. No idea of it can be gained from the brief excerpt given by Lord John Russell in his "Life of Fox," which is in truth substantially the same as one of Sheridan's paragraphs.[2] But, from George IV.'s conversation in 1825, it "out-Burked Burke" in bitterness and violence, though it was

personal qualities of the Kings!—A woman or alien, ignorant of our laws and customs—an infant: on what principle is allegiance due to that infant? . . . The true great object and purpose . . . [is] the preservation and security of the Monarchy at a moment when if the popular bent of the Constitution were left to act for the Crown, or to assume its functions under pretence of vacancy or interregnum, the unalterable nature of man and things would make it inevitable that the rights of the monarchy would instantly be struck off, and its utter ruin perhaps be splendidly accomplished. The Constitution therefore says to the two Houses, . . . 'Your King is virtually incapacitated, he is under decease, or he is in the cradle —but you, the House of Commons, and the House of Peers, shall not assume the government and act for him, because you cannot be a Parliament or have a legal or constitutional form or existence till he, incapable as he is, has met you by his presence in Representation, and given you that form and character in which alone you can make law or command obedience in this land.'" He shows that the doctrine of the Privy Council representing Monarchy under the breakdown of the Monarch is untenable. It would be "fatal to liberty."

[1] Even Dr. Lawrence, of "The Rolliad," was at first employed in drawing up a protest against the House of Lords, but it was disapproved, and the task fell to Elliot. Cf. Elliot, "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 251.

[2] For the argument from public utility, cf. Russell's "Life of Fox," Vol. II., p. 195.

"one of the most noble and beautiful compositions that ever was penned."[1] Of Loughborough's, Sheridan's notes on the constitutional crisis give an adequate impression. Sheridan's own manifesto was terse, dignified and succinct; indeed, the style marks it as his, though he must have borrowed points from the sources which he combined. It was praised as "a masterpiece of strong and compressed reasoning."[2] Curiously enough, the Prince, in extolling Burke's performance to Croker, so mixes up matters as to insinuate that Sheridan purloined it, and thus occasioned his eventual rupture with Burke. But the royal memory clashed often with facts. What Burke really resented was the rejection of his own draft and the preference of Sheridan's.

Sheridan's letter will be found at the close of this volume.[3] It was expressly ascribed to him at the time by hostile newspapers, one of which impugned its motives as a wish to sow discord between Pitt and the Prince, and to publish "*his own observations.*"[4] Wraxall writes that it was "attributed to Fox,

[1] The recital to Croker on this and other political retrospects will be found in "Croker's Correspondence and Diaries," Vol. I., pp. 289–292. The confusion of George's memory is shown by the fact that he there asserts that a subsequent "Letter to the Queen" was drawn up by Burke. That letter was written by Sheridan; cf. Moore's "Life," Vol. II., p. 63 (from the Sheridan MSS.). "The paper," says George IV. of Burke's tractate, "took two hours in reading; it was exceedingly eloquent and violent. I have strong in my mind's eye the effect it made on the audience. The Duke of Portland looked more stupid than usual—not that he was at all as stupid as he looked—he had very good sense. He was really in a *maze*. Lord North kept up a perpetual noise between a cough and a growl, and Fox kept digging his fingers into the corner of his eye, a trick he had when anything perplexed him." Lord Stormont and Fox disapproved of it as too violent and bitter. A negative was put upon the paper, and according to the account, after being entrusted to Jack Payne, it was borrowed by Sheridan, who, "with an inaccuracy not unusual to him, poor fellow," told Payne that the Prince had authorised him to do so, and thus began the breach with Burke.

[2] Cf. the *Star*, January 26, 1789.

[3] Cf. App. (2).

[4] The *St. James's Chronicle*, January 26—31, 1789. None, it observed, could now maintain that Sheridan's affairs were mismanaged, and it gibed at the display by theatrical parallels. The first number says, "Mr. Sheridan

'approved by Lord Loughborough.'"[1] But the Duchess affords a conclusive proof that the letter was Sheridan's, and the proof is confirmed by his wife's correspondence, and by the surrounding circumstances.

The letter itself will repay perusal. It is a plea for trust. Pitt's scheme of sub-division it terms "a project for producing weakness and insecurity in every branch of the administration of affairs. A project for dividing the royal family from each other; for separating the Court from the State, and thereby disjointing government from its natural and accustomed support. A scheme disconnecting the authority to command service from the power of animating it by reward; and for allotting to the Prince all the insidious duties of government without the means of softening them to the public by any one act of grace, favour, or benignity." No unity of plan was discoverable in this treatment, and the Prince was left in the dark as to why certain powers were withheld. Thinking as he did that the prerogatives of the Crown were "vested there as a trust for the benefit of the People," he also held that "the plea of public utility ought to be strong, manifest and urgent which called for the extinction or suspension of any one of those essential rights in the supreme power of the Representative; or which could justify the Prince in consenting that, in his person, an experiment should be made to ascertain with how small a portion of the kingly power the Executive of the country might be carried on." The Prince would forward any measure which might secure the same state of things existing, when His Majesty should happily recover, as existed before, and "no event could be more repugnant to the feelings of his Royal Father than the knowledge that the government of his son and representative had exhibited the sovereign power of the realm in a state of degradation." He deeply resented Pitt's want of confidence in restraining the alienation of the King's real and personal property. He had never shown any such inclination, "and it remained with Mr.

is obviously the author of the answer to Mr. Pitt's letter which enclosed a copy of the Restrictions to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales."

[1] Cf. Wraxall, Vol. V., p. 249.

Pitt to consider the eventual interests of the royal family, and to provide a proper and natural security against the mismanagement of them by others." Finally he deprecated leaving the national safety and welfare in the hands of the present ministers, and on the nation's generosity he relied in the "melancholy" crisis which more than anyone he deplored.[1]

On the night of December 31 Sheridan sauntered into Devonshire House. It was his habit to *flâner* there, and he loved to banter the Duchess. He was tired of "groping" through worm-eaten "precedents," and his studies had been disturbed by the chatter of two royal Dukes. But another task claimed his time. "He came here," writes Georgiana, "when he ought to have been writing the Prince's answer." To her he described Burke's and Loughborough's previous essays by the *mot* already repeated. "He was to make one out of both; it's to go to-morrow." He dispatched a missive making an appointment with Fox in South Street for nine of the next morning.

The comedy is resumed in her journal of next morning:—"Sheridan stayed here too late last night, so that he could not get the writing done and copied by Mrs. Sheridan till two to-day, and was obliged to go to the Prince and with him to Charles Fox's, before he had sent the letter for Charles's inspection. When he came to Charles with the Prince, he found [Thomas] Grenville and Fitzpatrick there, and the note he wrote here last night, saying he should be ready by nine, pinned up on the chimney. Charles spoke crossly to him—and said something (he won't tell what), to which Sheridan answered—'I am as God made me, and hate personalities.' And they have been *boudéing* each other all day."

[1] This version of the letter comes from the *St. James's Chronicle* of "Tuesday night, December 30, 1788." Another is in the *Star* for January 24. Its contents must have been supplied in advance. It tallies with the *précis* in Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 342, and it accords with the draft for it in a clerk's handwriting which remains among the Sheridan MSS. Among the latter is also a letter from Payne arranging that Sheridan should dine with the Prince instead of the converse: this was an exception, as the Prince preferred dining with his friends.

It is a vivid scene: the master of the situation dawdling and procrastinating as usual, the harassed Fox, who had given out that he was away from town, bursting into childish petulance, and the allies of each standing by as partisans. Fox, like Burke,[1] was not famed for punctuality, but for Sheridan that belated note of appointment hung over the chimney-piece, a sword of Damocles. On another occasion, when Fox was again churlish, all that the wit would answer was, "Don't be cross, Charles."

But there is more to support Sheridan's authorship than this. The Duchess mentions that Mrs. Sheridan copied the letter. The Prince, its nominal author, signed it in her drawing-room, as the following unnoticed letter to Mrs. Canning bears witness:—

"The Prince has consented to take the Regency even though all Mr. Pitt's restrictions should be carried; and he has written an answer to the Ministers explaining his reasons for so doing. I should think that Answer will appear soon in the Papers. It is vastly well done, and I am sure might make all unprejudiced Persons love the Prince and hate Pitt. I have had a great hand in it, for I copied it twice, and the copy actually sent to the Cabinet was written by me and signed by the Prince. I intend when he is Regent to claim something good for myself for secret service."

The proofs that Sheridan wrote this letter, despite the contemporary denials which over-persuaded Moore,[2] are not yet

[1] When Burke had promised to attend at Carlton House to read his promised letter which gave way to Sheridan's, at nine, the conclave waited for him till nearly midnight, when he wrote to say that the composition was not finished. Cf. Croker's Corr., and "Diary," Vol. I., p. 290.

[2] Moore at first accredited the letter to Sheridan, and he cited the Bishop of Winchester's authority for Sheridan's authorship of this "admirable production" (cf. Moore's "Life," Vol. II., p. 52), but on Sir James Mackintosh's opinion he decided in favour of Burke. By Elliot's own admission it could not be by Elliot: "There was not a word of the Prince's letter to Pitt mine. It was originally Burke's, altered a little, but not improved, by Sheridan and other critics." Cf. Elliot's "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 268. But Burke's, as we have seen, was a very

closed. On January 24 Burke sent Windham a letter extending, like so many of his epistles, to as many as thirteen pages. In this missive Burke's soreness and resentment are obvious, and indeed a memorandum for a speech of his as early as December, ran: "I know no more of the inside of Carlton House than I do of Buckingham House." He believed that he had been thrown over and supplanted. What the Prince ought to have done, he wrote, was to have communicated the King's condition to the House of Commons, and in person to have imparted it to the House of Lords, and "to have desired the advice and assistance of the two Houses." That advice, he said, had been disregarded, and "afterwards I was little consulted." He spoke "of the faith which Mr. Sheridan has held out on the part of the Prince that he will comply with the requisitions of the House of Commons"; he asked "if the Prince had authorised him to speak in this manner" in "the two voluntary declarations." Not one syllable does he breathe of his own part in the matter. From first to last he is vexed that others have taken his place.[1] But he wrote to Lord Charlemont in the succeeding summer that, had they chosen, his party might have forearmed themselves;—"there was an opportunity which was not made use of for that purpose and which could scarcely have failed of turning the tables on their adversaries."[2] This refers to the discarded document which he himself had composed. Beyond question Sheridan indited the letter which eventually was used.

He spoke much and often on the problem during January, and he and Fox both urged that by constituting a real Regent without annual election, Pitt could save England from becoming a republic. Other matters involved themselves with these. The worn scandals of the Prince's marriage

lengthy and fiery farrago. Elizabeth Sheridan also mentions "the letter to the Cabinet." Some notes for it exist in the Sheridan MSS.

[1] Burke's Corr., Vol. III., pp. 88—101. The Prince made the *amende* to Burke. On February 8, he required his attendance.

[2] Cf. Hardy's "Memoirs" of Lord Charlemont, cited by Moore, Vol. II., p. 59.

revived, and Sheridan had to stop the imprint of a gross libel. Pasquinades abounded, and one—"The Songs of Midas"—bore hard on Sheridan and the Foxites. Many more "letters" were composed for the Prince, a long one by Sheridan about the Queen, a shorter one by Elliot to her; a memorial by Sheridan to the King, communications to everyone; the royal controversies knew no end.[1] The Regency Bill was passed, Ireland protested in its favour, delegates came over, and Sheridan dined with them. But all was in vain. By February 24, 1789, the King's recovery was pronounced. In mid-March the town was illuminated, and ere long he had returned public thanksgiving in St. Paul's Cathedral. When it was known that the Opposition had little more to hope, Sheridan received the news with philosophic cheeriness.[2] His sister's recital lends colour to Moore's story that, when all was up, "Sheri," or "Chéri," as his wife and the Duchess called him, simply raised his glass amid a throng of expectants, and gave the toast of the King's good health.

Thus ended a striking episode. On Guy Fawkes day,

[1] Sheridan's Letters for the Prince on the Queen's control of the household, and to the King (after his recovery), are given by Moore from the Sheridan MSS., Vol. II., pp. 63—69. The former (dated January 29), which Wraxall mentions as Sheridan's, contained the very words which Sheridan had vainly endeavoured to embody in Pitt's motion of January 27 for communicating the resolutions of Parliament to the Prince; cf. Wraxall, Vol. V., p. 283. The latter probably accompanied or gave way to Sir G. Elliot's lengthy memorial to the King. Elliot also wrote a shorter document complaining of the Queen's treatment of the Prince; cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. II., pp. 308—339. Early in March, the Queen wrote to the Prince, enclosing a letter from the King to her, dictated by Pitt and beginning "My dearest Charlotte." It was written in the house that they both inhabited—"a clumsy artifice," adds Sir Gilbert Elliot; cf. his "Life and Letters," Vol. I., pp. 279, 280.

[2] LeFanu MSS. (also cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 104): "Thursday, [March] 12. Dick came to us between twelve and one, and we did not break up till past two. He confirmed the news we had heard, but he has a spirit unacquainted with despondence, and though fatigue must be added to the anxiety he must feel, yet there was something cheering in his manner that in great measure conquered the glooms that hung over us before his return." This seems written before the end, for her letter speaks of the "Regency Bill" as proceeding.

1788—the anniversary of King William's birth—the Whigs had held high celebration. It took place at Chesterfield. The Devonshires, Osbornes, and Molyneuxes headed a great procession into the town; eight Revolution Clubs, with flags and emblems, followed. Nor was the occasion missed in the metropolis. At a banquet given at the "Crown and Anchor" in the Strand, the Whig Club commemorated their cause. The Duke of Portland took the chair. Sheridan uttered an eloquent harangue, and successfully proposed a subscription for a statue of the Revolution hero to be erected on Romney Mead.[1] Triumph was in the air; the Whigs dared Pitt to the combat. The Regency imbroglio followed; no effort was spared. At one time Pitt openly spoke of going out, and his enemies exulted. But Pitt, as always, came uppermost. He represented the real loyalty of the nation, rightly shocked at the spite of his opponents and rightly dreading their return to power. Fox's want of resolution and tendency to extremes popularised him in opposition, but excluded him from power. Sheridan and the rest, though never anti-monarchists, had acted as if they were, and they had traded on opportunity. For the future their course lay downwards.

[1] Cf. "The Annual Register" for 1788 ("Chronicle"), pp. 149, 220.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JACOBINISM AND THE BREACH WITH BURKE

### [WITH SHERIDAN'S NOTES FOR A COUNTERBLAST] (1789, 1790)

"The people are the natural control on authority, but to exercise and control together is contradictory, and impossible."—BURKE.

SHERIDAN'S energies were manifold during this year of 1789. In Parliament he discussed all Pitt's measures, including the Tobacco Regulation Bill, and the Newspaper Duty Act, as to which he said that "he was a friend to newspapers not merely because they blazoned forth the virtues of the present administration, but because they proclaimed its deeds." [1] He again girded himself to the reform of the Scots Boroughs; he tackled finance at length and in detail. At the theatre, again nearing one of its recurrent crises, he was equally active. Among the plays submitted to him in the previous year and still surviving, was a musical farce which the writer may be allowed to mention, since its hero is a namesake. Its title is "The Doctor and Apothecary." It was translated by Sheridan's friend Cobb from the German of the Viennese Baron Dittersdorff; Storace composed the music, its run proved successful, and its songs lingered.

But graver topics claim attention. During the years 1790 and 1791 Russia proved a stalking-horse for the Opposition against Pitt. The Czarina Catherine, in her ambitious crusade against Turkey, caballed to occupy a Bessarabian stronghold named Oczakow. For a time Pitt blustered of English interference, and then he tamely climbed down. Sheridan attacked him with ironical fusillades. He treated his alternate bombast and bathos much as Disraeli in the next century was to handle Palmerston—"menacing Russia with a perfumed cane," or,

[1] Speech of July 3, 1789. Speeches, Vol. I., p. 489.

in the Schleswig-Holstein business, at first fulminating for war and then climbing down. The crisis was complicated by the methods that Fox thought fit to adopt. His friend Adair took a little airing to Petersburg. Informally he gave the Empress to understand that Fox sympathised with her aims. Pitt, and afterwards Burke, who set the accusation afoot, were naturally furious. Years later the whole affair was authentically denied, but though there was no Opposition embassy, small doubt can exist that Pitt's anti-Russian schemes were clogged by reassurances under the rose. The Czarina penned a fulsome note of admiration which Holland House still cherishes;[1] and she added the bust of Fox to her gallery of heroes.

Sheridan termed Pitt's proceedings "an armed negotiation."[2] Wars and rumours of war prevailed; folks who had never heard of the Dnieper and the Dniester prattled of little else. Sheridan railed at these alarmists. "If the Empress," he wrote to Lady Bessborough, "could get complete possession of the Black Sea, then, ma'am, with the future connivance or assistance of the Emperor, she may certainly get actual possession of Constantinople and then of the European Provinces of Turkey, which is all that is necessary; and then, ma'am, turn the Black Sea into a wet dock, and floating down the stores from the north, she may fit out such a fleet as no one can peep at. . . . Out they will come to the Mediterranean, swallow up all the States of Italy like larks, and at last a Russian brigadier may be quartered at Roehampton, for aught I know, within these hundred years. So on your account, ma'am, I am rather for the balance of Europe."[3] In Parliament he derided Pitt's policy in a graver tone. Pitt wished to compel the restoration of Oczakow to the Porte. Why interfere? Suppose Russia had treated us in this way in 1782 when the Dutch peace was being negotiated, and insisted on the surrender of Negapatam to Holland with a view to its transfer

[1] A copy is also among the Sheridan MSS.

[2] Speech of June 2, 1791. Speeches, Vol. II., p. 65.

[3] Cf. the series of letters to the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Bessborough, transcribed in App. (4).

to Denmark. What should we have said to such a demand? And even now he suspected that Prussian objects in Poland lay at the root of all this bluster. Suppose we went to war. Prussia, the Emperor and Russia would get what they wanted, but Britain would pay the piper. "Give us your confidence; we are responsible," cried the chief minister. But confidence might not always be well given. Did he recollect the different prospect held out but shortly earlier? "Did he remember that this was the promised millennium, the halcyon year in the spring of which we were to taste the sweets and blossoms it was to produce?" And now were we willing to take up "the little, busy, tattling spirit of intrigue," that worst part of the French character, and bustle to produce fresh wars and disturbances?[1] Pitt's policy, he urged in some surviving notes for another speech on this question, was not "the sullen strife of Ajax giving fortitude even to retreat. It was the shuffling pace of a serpent hissing while he flies, and, like the magnanimous trumpeter in 'Hudibras,' sounding the charge while he and his whole posse of companions were galloping from the *Bear* as fast as their horses would carry them from the field." This, said Sheridan, was a poor compliment to the big majority, now called on to contradict their past principles, if placemen, indeed, and principles could be named together. "They will die in their trenches with their places in their hands; they consider government as a post which they are bound to defend. This is the point of honour of which we have heard so much, that they, with such disciplined troops and with the throne in their rear, shall not be bound to deliver up deserters."[2] None the less, Lord Carmarthen, the conscientious Foreign Secretary, did desert, and on his resignation, Lord Grenville stepped into his shoes, the coldest miscalculator of chances that the Foreign Office has yet known.

[1] Speech of April 12, 1791, on Mr. Grey's motions against any interference in the war between Russia and the Porte. Speeches, Vol. II., p. 37.

[2] Sheridan MSS. Some of these notes seem to have been made for yet a third speech.

And this was the year of the Bastille, when all the dark issues of the French Revolution were boded. Enthusiasts and poets hailed its omens as forecasting the sunrise. The chaos of uproar, the wilder excesses, the seas of blood, had not yet proclaimed an orgy of the scum. Burke, however, and to his honour, early discerned the true drift of the "Sovereignty of the People." He knew that mobs could never rule, that "wisdom told by the head" meant reckless and indiscriminate revenge. His attitude has already been shadowed, and he well observed that "philosophic" dogmas so glibly absorbed by indifferentists, "might become as much a cause of fanaticism as a dogma in religion."[1] Burke combined fire and philosophy, but his doctrinaire views could not commend themselves to "men of feeling" like Fox and Grey and Sheridan. Impulse and partisanship coloured their stubborn resistance to Pitt, nor was it long ere they branded Burke as the deserter who revisited their camp as a spy. Indeed, all along, there had been inherent divergences which had parted an austere thinker from sentimental rebels, though in his turn Sheridan soon diverged from his colleagues by taking an English instead of a cosmopolitan standpoint. "Liberty" is a fine word that can be twisted to opposite uses. A citizen can be free in his sphere, or free to get out of it. It was in the latter sense that Fox and his friends began to interpret freedom. None the less it will be seen that in 1793, when Pitt, long timid and irresolute, dared war with France, the Opposition for once were correct in their outlook. Pitt took up arms too soon, and against his first plan of a northern league and an armed neutrality. He was rash, though out of his rashness arose deliverance. And when he had once committed the country, unforeseeable factors confronted him, the chief and sum of which was Napoleon. His premature resort to arms, and entanglement with unstable allies, did furnish space of preparatory discipline for the gigantic issues in store. As we look back on that awful grapple, the combatants appear only

[1] "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs."

like pieces on the chess-board, and the great, invisible hand that moved them is half revealed.

The breach, already latent, between lecturer Burke and dramatist Sheridan first came to a head in the latter's famous speech of February 9, 1790, on the Army Estimates and the French Revolution.[1]

This debate ought to have been limited to its subject, the increase of the Army, which Grenville introduced in a well-reasoned statement. But Fox jumped to his feet and chose to wander off into France. France, he argued, could offer no present danger to Britain, and it would be base to assail her now. A change "as sudden as unexpected" had befallen her, and from feeling and principle he exulted in it. Soldiers were at last citizens, and this tempered his distaste for a standing army. Even if in three years' time, through some other change, France were again to become formidable, it was unlikely that her growing power would outstrip our opportunities for caution; "the difference between pulling down and building up was great. A nation might fall from a pinnacle of power to actual inertness, but a sudden rise to grandeur was impossible." After a few words from Pitt, Burke threw down the gauntlet against his colleagues. He was sick of the recent tirades in French favour by Price, Priestley, and Payne. At the close of the preceding year he had published a long letter to a Frenchman, in which he spoke of Rousseau's Social Contract with contempt, while he characterised the Revolution as a bout against social freedom. By the end of this year he was to publish his celebrated "Reflections," and in the next, his "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." He was resolved

[1] Speeches, Vol. I., p. 517. In 1795 appeared a squib against Sheridan, entitled "The Political Dramatist." The following lines in it adumbrate the attitude of his enemies:—

> "But soft: my tripping tongue through frailty slips;
> Why come state truths thus mended from *my* lips?
> Courage: in vain they shield the sacred door:
> Things shall be new; mere party is no more;
> No trifles now, nor sounds, the soul employ;
> All that Metellus guards, a Cæsar shall destroy."

to clear the air of cant, and it was soon patent that though he kept up a show of opposition to Pitt, and even now did homage to Fox, his real object was to pave the way for a severance. Moreover, he was cognisant of Sheridan's wish that evening to make a popular speech in praise of the Revolution, and he determined to counteract it in advance.[1]

He began by blindly asserting that France was "expunged out of the system of Europe." She was in "a swoon," and as a Power no more to be dreaded. True, she was not the centre of contagion that she had been under the great monarch of whose reign he presented a panorama. But the dangers now threatening were constitutional—treason and atheism both embodied in that "institute and digest of anarchy called the *Rights of Man*." Blackguards had levelled and plundered. Nowhere was their system worse instanced than "in the late assumption of citizenship by the army." He warned England against introducing the French spirit or the French democracy, and he had come forward to single out one or two expressions of his "best friend" for that purpose. His hearers, who knew that he used to call England "a moon shone upon by France," were surprised, but the sensation, in a day of parliamentary sensations, was reserved for his thunderbolt against Fox.[2]

He regretted the words that had fallen from Fox, but imputed them to his approved zeal for the best of all causes—liberty. He smothered him with personal praise. To his great and masterly understanding he had joined (and "*had*" was suggestive) the greatest possible degree of that natural moderation which is the best corrective of power [but in this Burke knew Fox's deficiency]. He was of the most artless, candid, open, and benevolent disposition, disinterested in the extreme; of a temper mild and placable. But in extolling the National Assembly he had overshot the mark. The French soldiers, too,

[1] This is explicitly stated by Sir G. Elliot in his "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 353.

[2] Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote that the altercation "made more noise and occasioned more conversation throughout London than almost any event" he could recollect; cf. his "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 350.

were not "citizens," but "base hireling mutineers; mercenary, sordid deserters, wholly destitute of any honourable principle." He felt genuinely concerned that "this strange thing called a Revolution in France should be compared to the glorious Revolution in England." He laboured to distinguish between "reform" and "innovation." For himself, he approached the end of his career, natural as well as political; he felt weak and weary; he longed for rest. In the Constitution itself he desired few changes—happy if he left it none the worse for his exertions in its service. But much as it would afflict him were any friend of his implicated in measures like those of the French democracy, he would forsake his best friends and join with his worst enemies to oppose either the means or the end. Burke's speech was a splendid outburst, but even his warmest adherents deemed it "unguarded."[1]

Fox did his utmost to appease his master. His counter-compliment was fine, and he was "almost seen to weep" in delivering it. Such was his sense and value of Burke's principles and judgment, such his esteem for his friendship, that if he were to put all the political information he had acquired from books, from science, and from knowledge of the world and its affairs into one scale, and the improvement derived from Burke's instruction and conversation in the other, he should be at a loss to say which would preponderate. But why should a few stray words in praise of an army no longer an instrument of despotism be construed into a design to democratise this country? He was equally opposed to all absolute forms of government. He would never lend himself to any conspiracy for the introduction of dangerous *innovations*. As for the two Revolutions, they differed in their circumstances. The French despotism had been far harsher than the British, and much as he lamented scenes of cruelty and bloodshed, he believed that when France had once settled down the issues in that country would be for the benefit of this. He besought Burke to believe that his alarms were

[1] Cf. the passage cited from Sir G. Elliot.

groundless. Then Burke rose once more, asserting that the severance of a limb would not inflict greater pain on him than "a public and violent difference of opinion," yet he was glad to have elicited an answer "so satisfactory to himself, the House, and the nation."[1]

These details form a necessary prelude to Sheridan's intervention. Burke impressed the House with a suspicion that Fox had yielded to younger and less fit advisers.[2] The innuendo pointed to Sheridan, who was afterwards accused of fomenting the irritation. His speech certainly provoked a final farewell from Burke to himself. But it cannot be read without discerning outside personal vexation, a feeling that Burke's utterance had taken the shape of rank political hypocrisy. Burke's brain was now possessed by France fully as much as by Warren Hastings. His invectives—so Sheridan fancied—extended to actual persons, to Lafayette and to Bailly. His distinctions of "reform" from "innovation" seemed quibbles. Nor did his flatteries march with his inner meaning. Everyone knew that he had come down prepared to anti-gallicise the situation. If he wished to be quit of his old friends, let him say so frankly and have done.

Sheridan assailed Burke not for his "principles," which he exalted, but for his present application of them; and by this line of argument he undoubtedly stung to the quick one who condensed the classics into a political dialectus. He upheld the French Revolution, so far as it had proceeded, as a movement quite as just as the English. He defended the National Assembly. How could it be said to have overturned the laws and revenues?—laws, forsooth, that were "the arbitrary mandate of capricious despotism," revenues that were nothing but "national bankruptcy." The fundamental error of Burke's argument was in imputing to the Assembly those evils which "they had found existing in full deformity at the first hour of their meeting." Some radical amendment of a constitution

[1] Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., pp. 466—473; McCormick's "Memorials" of Burke, pp. 329—335.

[2] Cf. Minto, "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 350.

under which such ills flourished was inevitable. The "frame and fabric" had to be altered, and this was "the claim and cry of all France," not of the Assembly alone. In "abhorring the cruelties which had been committed," he joined heartily with Burke:—

"But what was the striking lesson, the awful moral that was to be gathered from the outrages of the populace? What but a supreme abhorrence of that accursed system of despotic government which had so deformed and corrupted human nature as to make its subjects capable of such acts; a government that sets at nought the property, the liberty and lives of the subjects, . . . that deals in extortion, dungeons, and tortures, shows an example of depravity to the slaves over which it rules? And, if a day of power comes to the wretched populace, it is not to be wondered at, however much it may be regretted, that they should act without those feelings of justice and humanity which the principles and practice of their governors had stripped them of." "To traduce the National Assembly was to libel the whole French nation." With a fierceness which he afterwards regretted,[1] he inquired whether Burke "had found his doctrines amidst the stones of the Bastille, or collected them from the baggage of Marshal Broglie."

Could the French King have given the French people a good constitution? He denied it. "The French were naturally a brave and generous people: their vice had been their government." In radically amending it, however, he could not approve of their wanton persecution either of nobles or royalties. And Sheridan ended where he began, by controverting Burke's comparison of the Revolution in France with ours in England. "He had never been accustomed," he said, "to consider that transaction as merely the removal of one man and the substitution of another, but as the glorious era that gave a real and efficient freedom to the country, and established on a permanent basis those sacred principles of government and reverence for the rights of men which he, for one, could not

[1] Cf. Sir G. Elliot's testimony, "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 351.

value here, without wishing to see them diffused throughout the world."

The tone exasperated Burke beyond measure. He publicly proclaimed that henceforward he and his honourable friend—"as he had been in the habit of calling him"—were separated in politics. Even so he might have expected more kindness. If Sheridan would not, "for the sake of a long and amicable connection," hear him with some impartiality, at least he might have done him the justice of stating his arguments fairly. He had charged him with advocating the despotism which he had blamed, and he was known to be its professed enemy. Again, had he "libelled" the National Assembly? His remarks had not been aimed so much against that body as against "the republic of Paris, whose authority guided or whose example was followed by all the republics of France. It was this republic, and not the National Assembly, that commanded the army." The whole tenor of his life proved him a firm and sincere friend of freedom. But under that description he was concerned to find persons in this country who entertained theories not thoroughly consistent with the safety of the State, and were perhaps ready to transfer to this kingdom, and for their own purposes, a part of the anarchy which prevailed in France. Sheridan's comments were not such as fitted "the moment of departed friendship." It was clear that he had "sacrificed friendship for the sake of catching some momentary popularity." Greatly as he should continue to admire the honourable gentleman's talents, he must tell him that his argument was chiefly an argument *ad invidiam*, and that all the applause which he could covet from clubs was scarcely worth the sacrifice which he had chosen to make for so insignificant an acquisition.

It is impossible not to sympathise with the worn veteran—the Whig Nestor—towering among his fellows, yet baited by a band of new-fangled extremists. Yet his closing hints were virulent. What had been his own suggestions of democratic despotism but an argument *ad invidiam*, and how then could he murmur against Sheridan's? The reference to clubs was not to the "Whig Club," though that too indulged in French sympathies.

It concerned the propagandist assemblies. The old Society for Constitutional Information, once the prop of reform, had now turned pro-Gallic, and to it more violent associations were affiliated: the new Corresponding Society, which certainly plied an intercourse with the revolutionists across the Channel, and the Society of the Friends of the People, which was to become an affair wholly Jacobin. To all but the second of these Sheridan seems to have belonged; to the first of them Fox belonged also. Still another, the "Revolution Club," when Parliament met in this autumn, was to cheer the toasts of "May the Parliament of Great Britain become a National Assembly!" and "When Mr. Burke shall be arraigned for a libel on the rights of men, may his trial be as long as Mr. Hastings's!"[1] No great time elapsed before the real English Jacobins rallied round "Citizen" Stone and Helen Maria Williams in Paris; before they were rumoured to have proposed Fox's health and Sheridan's; before French citizenship was offered, if declined.[2] Yet only three years hence, and Sheridan is to be found restraining Fox's ardour to champion these Societies in Parliament, and dissuading him from a challenge so rash and wilful.[3] Nor in this particular instance can Sheridan be truly charged with fanning the flame, which

[1] Cf. "Life and Letters" of Sir G. Elliot, Vol. I., p. 365.

[2] Sheridan denied that his health was drunk, though so went the rumour.

[3] Fox's letter is extant among the Sheridan MSS.:—"Dear Sheridan, though you do not like the writing on this subject, yet I cannot go to bed comfortably without telling you that the more I consider what you have been saying, the less am I satisfied with the means you propose. I wish to see you again, but I own my present opinion is that the evil of a direct battle at the Friends of the People and Constitution which Grey mentioned, will be less than that of any Address to the Public acquiesced in by those members who think with me. Besides, there were some things in the proposed Address which, if I heard them right, I disapprove exceedingly. I mean that part which refers to the trials and acquittals [*i.e.*, of Payne, Horne Tooke and others]. I wish to see you very much, but I think it fair to repeat that my present inclination is to promote opposition and, if that fails, secession as much as is in my power. [This he accomplished some four years later.] Yours ever, C. J. Fox. Sunday night."

was bound in any case to blaze out on the part of Burke, as blaze out it did in a famous debate of the following year.

While Sheridan listened to Burke's reproaches, he winced and changed colour—a most unwonted self-betrayal. Burke, whom he had so lately lauded to the skies—Burke, at once the Bayard and the Crichton of his party, had proclaimed that henceforth they were political strangers. He could not but be moved, and Burke owned afterwards that in private he bore him no ill will. Every effort was made for a reconciliation. A mutual friend, O'Brien—another Irishman, who stood by Sheridan to the last—repaired next morning to Burke's house as a mediator, and an appointment was made for ten o'clock that night. Burke, however, dined out, and found Sheridan departing from Gerrard Street just as he returned home. They drove off together to the Duke of Portland's. Burke shook Sheridan by the hand and told him that the matter should be publicly set right. As they conversed, however, in the carriage, some argument advanced by Sheridan and conceived by Burke to mean self-justification, revived all his asperity. When they descended at Burlington House, both Fox and the Duke received them. But a conference of an hour and a half failed to appease the disputants. Sheridan "expressed great penitence" and was willing to make "all necessary concessions," but Burke —and Fox is the witness—"broke off the treaty too abruptly." Next day Burke's son took his father's place at a fresh Burlington House meeting. Pelham was present, and Pelham thought "young Burke rather *too hard* with Sheridan."[1] That night yet a third attempt at reconciliation seems to have failed. Once more the Duke of Portland assisted. The interview lasted from ten at night till three in the morning; but Burke remained "implacable."[2] On the evidence, it was not Sheridan's fault that Burke repulsed his apologies. They dined together not

[1] Sir G. Elliot's "Life and Letters," Vol. I., pp. 351, 352.

[2] Cf. a pamphlet, "Utrum Horum," cited by McCormick in his "Memorials" of Burke, p. 338. In a jotting left by Moore among the Sheridan MSS., he mentions this pamphlet among those that he wished to obtain.

long afterwards both at the Duke of Portland's and with the Prince of Wales, but Burke told Sir Gilbert Elliot that, while he "had no animosity" against Sheridan, their former friendship could not be restored even if this episode were to be patched over. The wound would admit of nothing more than a temporary cure.

Fox had now taken his line, and the "foxhounds" followed his halloo. Things marched. "The lanterns of Paris"—Burke wrote the phrase—"made their light shine before men,"[1] and while Fox basked in their beams, Burke illumined the world with the radiance of his anti-Revolution essays. He was bent on a final breach, and during May, 1791, the recommitment of the Quebec Bill, which opened out a comparison of various constitutions, gave the opportunity for one of the most dramatic and moving scenes that the House of Commons has ever witnessed. That historic debate cannot be detailed here, for Sheridan is not reported as taking part;[2] but Burke, after warning all to "fly from the French Constitution," brushed away Fox's whisper that "there was no loss of friends" by shouting that there was. He knew the penalty of his conduct. He had done his duty at the price of his friend; their friendship was at an end. In vain did Fox vindicate himself with a flood of tears. His arguments, Burke urged, obliterated his tenderness. The French "would go on from tyranny to tyranny, from oppression to oppression, until at last the whole system would terminate in the destruction of that miserable and deluded people. He sincerely hoped that no member of

[1] Cf. the letter to Sir G. Elliot in his "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 365.

[2] He did, however, try to stave off the dilemma by pleading in April for the postponement of the question; cf. Speeches, Vol. II., p. 48. And a MS. fragment exists among Sheridan's papers which is evidently meant for a contribution to this debate, for one of its sentences is "The Canadians have been thirty years in the wilderness, and you set up a calf of gold." Another (quoting Burke against Burke) runs: "What must Frenchmen think of Burke's abuse?—I cannot draw a bill of indictment against a whole People.—Pitt helps the Revolution.—For little purposes you shake the pillars of the Constitution.—You tell them that there is a desperate faction on one side. . . ."

that House would ever barter the constitution of this country, the eternal jewel of their souls, for a wild and visionary system which could only lead to confusion or disorder."[1] The results of this rupture were critical though not instant. Fox, who had learned everything from Burke, unlearned all, faster, daily. Burke, the mentor, the St. Paul of his party, withstood it to the face, and with Burke gradually went out the Duke of Portland,[2] the Grenvilles, Windham, Fitzwilliam and other great props of the cause. It was a Whig exodus, and the scattered Foxites were left alone. The Opposition votes, which had once numbered quite a hundred and sixty in the House of Commons, sank in the end to fewer than twenty-five.

Burke (in the letter to Elliot already cited) complained that Sheridan was to write against him.[3] Fragmentary notes for this unpublished counterblast survive among Sheridan's papers. Part of them must have been written in 1792, when the romantic Pamela was his guest, for "Pamela is here," finds a place on the manuscript. Some of the jottings criticise Burke's theories of the English Revolution. "There cannot," runs one, "be a greater fallacy than considering the Bill of Rights as the temperate accomplishment of the wishes of Freemen." Burke, says another, seeks to "bind our posterities." Burke's argument is "Don't attempt to be free, for you have no antiquity for it." The French "learned from Mr. Burke that they could not look to England for a Constitution":—

"The French might have placed their Constitution like ours. We have not *altered* ours by the Revolution. They might have our Constitution under James the Second, but the man is of consequence, and we gained by changing. They might have kept their King in a reformed Constitution—unfit, says Burke, to be an instrument of democracy. O how unfit to be the executive of machinating, arbitrary power! Compare our mistakes in

[1] Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., pp. 599—615.

[2] As early as 1790 the Duke wavered, and Sir G. Elliot drew up a paper for his consideration on this subject. Among the Sheridan Papers remain several letters from Fox to Grenville, bitterly complaining of the desertions.

[3] Elliot's "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 366.

settling our Constitution, bastardising the Pretender, beheading Charles. This boasted Constitution is the offspring of a thousand times worse crimes and frauds. The principles of the Revolution were ours."—"They [the French] are arraigned as if they had the ball at their feet, as if they might sit in temperate council. How were slaves to be animated? How was the hypocrisy of acquiescence in despotism to be counteracted? Burke, however, assumes the King's acquiescence to be all *royal knavery*."—"Let us follow the melodious enchantment of his song."—"Popular confidence is necessary." There are several sheets of these disjointed criticisms, and their rough outlines permeate his speeches. Henceforward he warmly censured the methods of the First Minister, who ruled "by Privy Council," whose ideal of discussion, said Sheridan, was to dispense with "information on the subject."

Thus, Sheridan on Pitt, Burke, and the Jacobins. His utterances will receive fresh illustration hereafter. Both he and Fox aided the Duchess of Devonshire in her efforts to save the heroic Queen. Their names appear in the reports sent to her by agents, and the writer has seen letters from the Duke of Dorset regarding this effort to save "poor Mrs. B.," as Marie Antoinette is styled in the secret correspondence. When once Napoleon shot up, Sheridan ceased to plead for the French, though all along he pelted Pitt with indignation at his clandestine system of government, at his "cant of responsibility, as a perquisite of office rather than the peril of his situation," at his treatment of an Opposition who "were tired of enduring the scourge and being obliged at the same time to kiss the rod."[1] But ere then Fox was half estranged from him. Burke had quarrelled with Fox alike and with Sheridan; Fox for a space had looked askance at Grey; Fox and Grey had both come to mistrust Sheridan. Windham had gone over to Pitt. Such was the plight of that once proud and united Opposition to the great minister who lived and died for England's glory.

[1] Speeches of June 2 and April 12, 1791. Cf. Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 43, 64.



Sheridan's son TOM,

from the portrait by Gainsborough

(in the possession of Algernon Sheridan, Esquire.)

## CHAPTER IX

### TRAGEDIES

### (1789—1792)

[MRS. SHERIDAN IN DANGER. HER ILLNESS AND DEATH. SHERIDAN'S LETTERS TO THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE AND LADY BESSBOROUGH.]

"Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory."

SHELLEY.

WHILE the world rang with Sheridan's rhetoric and the Sheridans tripped gay measures in the ball-room of society, tragedy lurked in the background and haunted their precincts. The minor tragedies and comedies of life were ever near them; the perennial duns, the bottomless pit of theatrical finance, and, on the laughing side, the Bohemian revellers who mixed queerly with the grander folks. Then, too, there was the desultory education of Tom, who managed to elude the Argus-eyes of sententious Parr, got into boyish scrapes, abounded in dare-devilry and wit, shared the Linley gift of music, and was eventually to be seen "flourishing a quire of paper before breakfast and burning it sheet by sheet, drinking the cream and throwing wet wafers against the wall"—the picture of a spoilt child.[1] But graver disasters and worse pitfalls now threatened their peace.

Hardly had the spectre of Mrs. Tickell's death chilled the Sheridan household, than Mrs. Sheridan herself began to show signs of the hereditary curse. These, however, came and went, the physicians were hopeful, and she did not cease to overtax her strength in the nightly round of amusement. Admiration

[1] "Early Life of S. Rogers," p. 401 (from the musician Jackson's information).

still pursued her. More than one royal prince dangled in her train. Charles Fox's "passion," she wrote, had revived. As for Sheridan, hurrying between Deepdene and London, off here, there, and everywhere: what with worry, business, preoccupations, and his "*menus plaisirs*," little, she told Mrs. Canning, was to be seen of him by her.[1] Already in her sister's lifetime hints of imprudence had been whispered. By mistake, Mrs. Tickell once opened a letter addressed to Mrs. Sheridan at Hampton Court, but she assured her that not a syllable of its contents would or could ever escape her lips. That was in 1786, but even now in 1789 something more definite came to light—something which showed Mrs. Sheridan what risks she ran, which proved the affection which her husband bore her, and proved also that the taint of her surroundings was powerless to infect her heart.

It will suffice to give two letters, one which Sheridan's wife now sent to Mrs. Canning, and one—its pendant—from Sheridan to the same tried and trusted friend. These two communications will tell the story, and neither of them has hitherto been published.

"Do you know," she writes, half jesting, "I was very near coming to spend a week with you some little time ago if I had not been afraid of my dear Sister Christian's purity bringing me and my peccadillos into a scrape that I know she would have been sorry for. Seriously, I was coming, but I thought if I did that S. would most probably pay me a visit, and then if he should have asked a question about the anonymous letter, I felt sure that your face at least would betray me, which, now that everything is blown over, would have been attended with very disagreeable consequences—and I therefore gave up a scheme which would have given us both, I hope, great pleasure. So you see what you get, or rather what you lose, by your goodness."

Remembering what Mrs. Sheridan had once confided about lax standards to her husband's sister, the meaning is obvious. An unsigned letter had been sent worthy of the

[1] Sheridan MSS. Mrs. Sheridan's Corr.

School for Scandal, and Sheridan was jealous. There were circumstances to conceal, though nothing had passed but indiscretion—the sentimental, romantic escapades of the circle which monopolised her husband's attention. Absurd rumours had been afloat, earlier, that he beat and starved her, and, when she was ill, she had forced herself to go out with him into society in order to refute these calumnies of the Backbites and Sneerwells.[1] But now something hidden was in train, something with which Mrs. Bouverie seems in some way connected, something that "Sister Christian" so censured that for a time she denied herself to her dearest friend, who well-nigh broke her heart at the interrupted companionship. It cannot have been long before Sheridan in his turn took up the pen; his delicacy does him honour:—

"Saturday night.

"Dear Mrs. Canning, Altho' I do not think it likely that I shall miss you to-morrow morning, yet I am so anxious to prevent any accidental engagement interfering with my seeing you that I send this to reach you very early, hoping that you will give me a leisure half-hour about twelve.

"I wish exceedingly to speak to you about your friend and your answer to Mrs. B. [? Bouverie]. I am confident you do not know what her situation is or what effect may arise, or has indeed taken place on her mind from the impression or apprehension that the *Friend she loved best in the world* appears, without explanation even, to be cool'd and chang'd towards her. She has not seen your letter to Mrs. B., and I would not for the world that she should. My dear Mrs. Canning, you do not know the state she has been in, and how perilous and critical her state now is, or indeed you would upbraid yourself for harbouring one altered thought, or even for abating in the least degree the warmest zeal of Friendship! of such friendship as nothing in Nature could ever have prevented her heart showing you. Pray forgive my writing to you thus; but convinced as I am that there is *no chance of saving her Life* but

[1] LeFanu MSS. Elizabeth Sheridan's Corr.

by tranquillising her mind, and knowing as I do, and as I did hope you knew, that God never form'd a better heart, and that she has no errors but what are the Faults of those whose conduct has created them in her against her nature, I feel it impossible for me not to own that the idea of unkindness or coldness towards her *from you* smote me most sensibly, as I see it does her to the soul. I have said more than I meant. When I have the satisfaction of seeing you to-morrow, I am sure you will enable me to heal her mind on this subject, or real love, charity, and candour exist nowhere.

"Yours most sincerely,

"R. B. Sheridan."

Mrs. Sheridan, it will be remembered, when she revisited East Burnham during her sister's lifetime, had already owned to having "eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Sorely now did she rue the giddiness of her fine friends, and henceforward she saw less of them daily. "Sister Christian" and she became once more inseparable, and when Mrs. Sheridan died that sweet woman tended her to the last.

But she never quite forgot her friend's error. While Mrs. Sheridan was fast sinking in her decline, an allusion to it on Mrs. Canning's part threw Sheridan into a paroxysm. "Not a word of that kind," he said; "she is an angel if ever there was one. It is all my fault; it is I—I that was the guilty fiend,"—and he sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands, quite convulsed with the agony of his feeling. Thus the story is related on Mrs. Canning's authority by the son's tattling tutor, Smyth.[1] It is partly borne out by the letter-journal which Sheridan dispatched almost daily while his wife lay dying at the Hot Wells. We find him morbid and self-tortured to excess, writhing under the impending blow, pouring out all the love, sorrow, and repentance of his heart. And yet even there he writes, "I am confident if she can recover, there never was on earth anything more perfect than she can be; *and, to be different, she says to me, for ever from*

[1] "Memoirs," p. 26.

*what she has been, makes her so seriously eager to live.*"[1] Alas! pure St. Cecilia, and shame on the heartless world that even for a second could half-sully her white soul!

Who was the tempter? Curiosity must be baffled, though Smyth (who cites Mrs. Canning) more than intimates that Lord Edward Fitzgerald was the man, and Moore mentions an intimacy, which, however, he shields from the shadow of disgrace. Such random shafts hardly fit the stainless and chivalrous record of a hero, and they probably proceeded from the scandalous quiver of Madame de Genlis, who intrigued that Pamela might be Sheridan's wife.[2] A warm friendship between Mrs. Sheridan and the future husband of Madame de Genlis's "daughter" seems highly probable. His close acquaintance with the Sheridans is certain.[3] It was even said that, in the year of her death, she pointed to the fantastic girl and begged him to marry her when she was gone. But if it be true that Lord Edward first saw Pamela some six months later at a theatre-box in Paris, this story also must fall to the ground. It is known that Pamela's resemblance to his dead wife fascinated Sheridan, that she and her preceptress visited him, that he and Fox helped them homewards at a moment when journeys to France were beset with peril.[4] But there is no sound proof that Lord Edward was the man of the "anonymous letter," nor was Moore aware (or Smyth) of the circumstances just described. Smyth, too, without corroboration, is never too safe a guide: his memory was loose, and he

[1] Cf. App. (4) to this Volume.

[2] Cf. Miss Ida Taylor's remarks in her "Life" of Lord Edward, p. 127. On the next page, however, she is mistaken in thinking that Sheridan's love cooled at the last. It was marked that never was he more devoted, and, indeed, his letters prove it.

[3] The writer has seen an account of a musical party that Sheridan gave some few years after his wife's death, where Lord Edward figures among the guests.

[4] A letter from Fox to Sheridan on this subject remains among the Sheridan Papers. Madame de Genlis makes out that Sheridan played terrifying pranks on them when they departed on their road to Dover, in order to detain them.

wrote at a distance from events which even at the time he had only superficially surveyed. There are many others who might have dared to invade Mrs. Sheridan's peace. That long and lonely time at Deepdene, her constant association with those who saw no harm in frolics of the kind, would readily lend themselves to congenial meetings. Handsome young secretaries there were of noble dukes who would not fail to sympathise with the sometimes neglected wife. But silence is the truest charity; in silence this episode must pass.

With Georgiana of Devonshire, her bosom friend Lady Elizabeth Foster, and her sister Lady Bessborough, the Sheridans had been intimate for years. How intimate Sheridan was is apparent not only from the tragic letters which must soon absorb our attention, but from two sprightly ones before the cloud of impending death had darkened his homestead.

"I don't know," writes Sheridan, "whether you are all out, giddy, gay, and chirruping like linnets and yellowhammers, or settling at home soberly like pretty bantams and peafowl on your perches. Pray send me a line if you receive this, dear T. L. Dear Bess, I called to-day."

The precise purport of "T. L." cannot be ascertained; it signifies the Duchess, and unkind gossips might construe it as "true love," though it is often used openly in correspondence. The next letter, to Lady Bessborough, is in a more whimsical vein, and it contains a witty passage. It seems to have been written at a country house where all were staying, and it gives some idea of the *badinage* that commended Sheridan to the Duchess's romping set:—

"Tuesday night.—I must bid 'oo good-night, for by the lights peeping to and fro over your room, I hope you are going to bed and to sleep happily with a hundred little cherubs fanning their white wings over you in appreciation of your goodness. Yours is the sweet untroubled sleep of purity.

"Grace shine around you with serenest beams, and whispering angels prompt your golden dreams—and yet, and yet, beware! Milton will tell you that even in Paradise serpents found their way to the ear of slumbering innocence.



GEORGIANA, Duchess of Devonshire,
from the original drawing by J. Downman
(in the possession of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire).

"Then, to be sure, poor Eve had no watchful guardian to pace up and down her windows, or clear-sighted friend to warn her of the stealthy approaches of T.'s [? Townshends], and F.'s [? Fitzpatricks], and W.'s and a long list of wicked letters—and Adam, I suppose, was . . . at Brooks's.

"'Fye, fye, Mr. S.!' I answer, Fye, fye, fye, Lord D[uncannon]. Tell him to come with you, or forbid your coming to a house so inhabited. Now don't look grave. Remember it is my office to speak truth. I shall be gone before your hazel eyes are open to-morrow, but (pray) for the sake of the Lord D. that you will not suffer me to return. Do not listen to Jack's elegies, or smile at F.'s epigrams, or tremble at C. W.'s powers, but put on that look of gentle firmness, of proud humility, and pass on in maiden meditation fancy free. Now draw the curtain, Sally."

There are other less sportive utterances of about the same date concerning joint speculations with Martindale the punter, and Sheridan's attempts to set the Duchess free;[1] others again relating to Georgiana's poems, which Sheridan assisted with such lively interest.

But as we reach the year 1792 his correspondence becomes truly tragic. Mrs. Sheridan was almost despaired of, the Duchess and her sister were away in Savoy, and to both he daily disclosed his anguish.

Mrs. Sheridan had long sighed for a little girl to remind her of the vanished sister and to bind her closer to her husband. In the spring of 1791, at Cromwell House, Brompton, whither she had gone, doubtless for quiet, her desire was at length gratified, and the child was baptised Mary, in memory of Mrs. Tickell. Mrs. Sheridan had a true mother's heart. At this

[1] In Eg. MS. 1976, f. 1, is a letter from a Mr. J. R. Corker to Sheridan about a note for £500 left with him by a Mr. Pearson of Tavistock Street. Pearson being "distressed," was about to "apply in an unpleasant manner" to the Duchess, which the writer prevented by giving him £200. This he did on Sheridan's assurance that he should be repaid when the Duchess returned to England. This sentence enables us to date the letter as of 1792. He sent the note some time ago, he writes, to Lady Duncannon, but now wants it back in order to proceed against Pearson.

time she was tending the Tickell children, and amid all her gaieties she would read to the little Crewes at Crewe Hall. The tenancy of Cromwell House was one more sign of Sheridan's extravagance, for at this date, besides Bruton Street, he had already leased a large house at Isleworth, the scene of his bygone revels with young Lacy, and now the property of Mrs. Keppel.[1]

Mrs. Sheridan's health seemed re-established after the child's birth, but suddenly the old symptoms returned, and in sore distress her husband first took her to Southampton, whence he sent the subjoined letter of melancholy self-reproaches :—

" . . . I am just returned," he writes, " from a long solitary walk on the beach. Night, silence, solitude, and the sea combined will unhinge the cheerfulness of anyone, when there has been length of life enough to bring regret in reflecting on many past scenes, and to offer slender hope of anticipating the future. . . . There never has been any part of your letter that has more my attention and interested me so much as when you have appeared earnestly solicitous to convey to my mind the Faith, the Hope and the Religion which I do believe exist in yours. . . . How many years have passed " (he proceeds, looking back on his elopement) " since on these unreasoning, restless waters, which this night I have been gazing at and listening to, I bore poor E., who is now so near me fading in sickness, from all her natural attachments and affections ; and then loved her so that had she died, as I once thought she would in the passage, I should gladly have plunged with her body to the grave. What times and what changes have passed, . . . what has the interval of my Life been, and what is left me but misery from memory, and horror of Reflection ! "[2]

On May 3 he again took up his pen, and unburdened his heart to those whom he regarded as alone able to afford it relief. He wrote from Spean Hill on the road to the Bristol Hot Wells. His wife was " in bed, very ill, eager to get there and sanguine of the event." " But," he adds,

[1] Cf. Eg. MS. 2137, f. 149d.
[2] Cf. App. (4).



'Maternal Instruction'

(Mrs. Sheridan teaching the children),

from an engraving,

after the picture by Mrs. Crewe.

"many gloomy omens have told me our hopes will be disappointed. I have been in long and great anxiety about her, flying from my fears, and yet hoping, one event safely over, that all would be well. . . . Since Friday, when the infant was christened, she has been rapidly falling back. Her impatience to get to Bristol made all delay impossible. I was to have followed her in a week,—but yesterday she was so sunk and alarmed that she begged me not to leave her, though, before, she had stipulated that I should settle my affairs in town, and I was only to come with her to Maidenhead Bridge, so I returned to town, and have overtaken her to-day at this place." Mrs. Canning was with her, and Sheridan has no praise high enough for the self-sacrifice of this true-hearted woman.

On the next Monday he resumes his journal from Bristol.[1] She had borne the journey well. Dr. Bain (a young physician who was to attend his own death-bed) gave them hopes. "I do not feel," writes Sheridan, "as if I should pursue my plan of writing to you and sharing the melancholy moments I pass here, for the only time I am away from her at night, I get into such gloomy fits I can do nothing. If you were with me now, you would not think it necessary to bid me reflect, or look into my own mind." He tells Lady Bessborough how they had passed Kingsdown, the scene of his second duel for her who now lay dying. He recalls the romantic circumstances and surroundings: how near death he had been; what good resolves he had made, which, alas! he had broken; how the recollection of "the irregularity" of all his "life and pursuits" made "reflection less tolerable to him than even to those who have acted worse."

His diary is one of hopes and fears and panics and despair. He was summoned to her at four in the morning; she had a violent pain in her side. Next day she was bled and blistered.

[1] Mr. J. Sturge Cotterell in 1898 did his utmost to trace the house where the Sheridans stayed at the Hot Wells, but without success. He conjectured with likelihood, however, that they took up their abode in the favourite Colonnade behind the "Pontoon." Among those visiting the place at the same time Sheridan mentions Lady Sarah Napier in these letters.

"I cannot describe to you," he moans, "how horrid the solitude of the night is to me." Now she shows a gleam of returning strength, and again her forces ebb away. She longs after heavenly things.

"Ever since her child was born," he recounts, "she has turned her mind almost wholly to think and talk and read on religious subjects, and her fortitude and calmness have astonished me. She has put by every other contemplation." She is eager to live that she may be all in all to him; should she recover, who could be more perfect? "But she cannot be deceived about the danger of her situation. The affection and kindness of her words and manner to me make me more unhappy, and do not comfort." And then follows a pathetic picture:—

"Last night she desired to be placed at the pianoforte. Looking like a shadow of her own picture, she played some notes with the tears dropping on her thin arms. Her mind is become heavenly, but her mortal form is fading from my sight, and I look in vain into my own mind for assent to her apparent conviction that all will not perish. I mean to send for my son, and she wishes for him." She received the sacrament some weeks before the end, and she confided a paper to Mrs. Canning which may have been the directions that she drew up by way of informal will, or, more likely, the paper which committed the care of her infant daughter to her dear, dear Mrs. Canning.[1]

[1] So Mrs. Canning says in a letter. The other document (Sheridan MSS.) is dated "April 14, 1792. Hot Wells, Bristol," but from Sheridan's letters the Hot Wells were not reached till May, and Mrs. Sheridan probably began her instructions before she reached her destination and added the name of the place afterwards, or perhaps "April" is a slip for June. The following is a summary of its contents. To Eliza Canning her god-daughter she left her watch, chain, and some jewels; to Jane Linley her pearls. The "fine linen of all kinds which she had lately made up was so far as suitable to be reserved for her dear little infant," the rest to be divided between the beneficiaries just named. To a servant she bequeathed much of her wardrobe, and she specially requested that her mother might not interfere. The £50 or more in a brown silk pocket-book at Isleworth was to be disposed of in mourning rings for the Leighs and the LeFanus; while the "fausse montre, containing my dear husband's picture," she left to "my

Sheridan's letters have shed light on his own feelings. Of the closing scenes Mrs. Canning and Dr. Bain are our witnesses. Both agree that nothing could exceed his tenderness.[1] His devotion, said Dr. Bain, was "that of a lover."

The son in whom they delighted arrived. The Linleys, then at Bath, visited her on one of her better days, and departed. But on June 27 a turn came for the worse; she could no longer rise, and Sheridan hurriedly recalled them. Here Mrs. Canning takes up the tale in a letter to Sheridan's sister:—

"They were introduced one at a time at her bedside and were prepared as much as possible for this sad scene. The women bore it very well, but all our feelings were awakened for her poor father. The interview between him and the dear angel was afflicting and heart-breaking to the greatest degree imaginable. I was afraid she would have sunk under the cruel agitation—she said it was indeed too much for her. She gave some kind injunction to each of them, and said everything she could to comfort them under this severe trial. They then parted in the hope of seeing her again in the evening, but they never saw her more. Mr. Sheridan and I sat up all that night

dear and beloved friend, Mrs. Canning," also a portrait of herself, to be painted by anyone but Cosway, and a ring both to her and her daughter. She desired that "the picture of my dear Mary" should be "unset, and one copied of me joined to it, and the hair blended, and this, I trust, Mrs. Tickell will permit my dearest Betty to wear in remembrance of her two poor Mothers." To her own mother she gave a "new black cloak which will be comfortable for her in the winter." She disposed of all her ornaments, and desired that £25 should be settled on George Edwards (Sheridan's butler) and on the woman-servant—"Faddy"—already benefited. "There are other circumstances," she concludes, "which I have mentioned to Mrs. Canning which I hope will likewise be considered as my earnest wish—I am now exhausted."

[1] Cf. the documents in Moore's Life, Vol. II., pp. 160—166. Mrs. Canning's letters were addressed to Alicia LeFanu ("Lissy"), who cannot here be mistaken for Elizabeth. Smyth also relates what he was told on this head by Mrs. Canning: "No attention was ever equal to his during the last stages of her illness. He bore her in his arms to the spring, he was never absent from her, he watched by her bedside, read the Scriptures to her, joined in her devotions, and rendered her every office of tenderness and duty. . . ." Cf. "Memoirs," p. 27.

with her,—indeed he had done so for several nights before, and never left her one moment that could be avoided. About four o'clock in the morning we perceived an alarming change, and sent for her physician. She said to him, 'If you can relieve me, do it quickly; if not, do not let me struggle, but give me some laudanum.' His answer was, 'Then I will give you some laudanum.' Before she took it, she desired to see Tom and Betty Tickell, of whom she took a most affecting leave. Your brother behaved most wonderfully, though his heart was breaking; and at times his feelings were so violent, that I feared he would have been quite ungovernable at the last. Yet he summoned up courage to kneel at the bedside, till he felt the last pulse of expiring excellence, and then withdrew. She died at five o'clock in the morning. . . . For my part I never beheld such a scene—never suffered such a conflict—much as I have suffered on my own account. While I live, the remembrance of it and the dear lost object can never be effaced from my mind."[1] Till her last moments she was perfectly tranquil and sensible. "She talked," writes Mrs. Canning again, "with the greatest composure of her approaching dissolution, assuring us all that she had the most perfect confidence in the mercies of an all-powerful and merciful Being, from whom alone she could have derived the inward comfort and support she felt at that awful moment, and she said she had no fear of death, and that all her concern arose from the thoughts of leaving so many dear and tender ties, and of what they would suffer from her loss."

Sheridan left a striking thought on a scrap of paper: "The loss of the breath from a beloved object, long suffering in pain, and certainty to die, is not so great a privation as the last loss of her beautiful remains, if they remain so. The victory of the Grave is sharper than the sting of Death."[2]

Her wish was to lie near her sister. The funeral took place on the 13th at Wells. It proved a function. A long and

[1] Mrs. Canning to Alicia LeFanu, July 19, 1792. Moore, Vol. II., p. 161.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

representative *cortège* attended the hearse, and the populace lined the road all the way from Bristol to the cathedral.[1] Such a parade grated against his feelings. Writing nearly fourteen years afterwards, when Jane Linley, then Mrs. Ward, was laid to rest in a quiet village, Sheridan owned how much he preferred that simplicity to the pomp that had jarred on his desolation when St. Cecilia was buried.[2] But the pageant of her funeral marked the wide-spread homage to one so variously endeared, both in public and private.

Tributes to her sweet form, voice, life and character abounded, and not the least touching was the Latin "ode" or epitaph composed in her honour by Dr. Harrington, the friend of her childhood.[3] How Sheridan descended into the vault when

[1] There is a contemporary account in Eg. MS. 2137, f. 153, in the British Museum. Mrs. Canning wrote that they could hardly move for the concourse of people. Mr. Leigh, an old friend, read the service. A tablet once in the cloisters, now in the cathedral, is not far from the site of the Linley vault.

[2] "I have been to-day at Iver attending poor Jane's funeral with Tom. It was particularly decent and affecting. If you remember, she lived directly opposite the church of that very neat and seemingly innocent village, and like that was her burial—no hearse or coach. Her sister's was a gaudy parade and show from Bristol to Wells Cathedral, where all the mob, high and low, were in the church surveying and surrounding the vault. The recollection of the scene and of the journey has always pained me, independently of the occasion itself, and has decided me, who am a friend without superstition to attention and attendance on these occasions, to prefer the mode I witnessed this morning—and so shall be my own passage to the grave" (Sheridan to his second wife, Wednesday night, January 16, 1806). Sheridan MSS.

[3] It was published in the Rev. Richard Graves's "The Reveries of Solitude" in 1793. Graves lived at Claverton, Bath. It runs as follows:—

"In obitum
Dom. Eliz. Sheridan,
Formâ, voce, atque ingenio,
Inter ornatas ornatissimæ,
Ab imo amores ita suspirat
Amicus.

Eheu! Eheu! Lugeant mortales!
Ejâ vero gaudent celestes!
Dulces ad amplexus,
Socians jam citharæ melos,
Redit pergrata,
En! iterum soror
Suaviusque nil manet
Hosannis."

And it was thus ill-translated:—

"Sure every beauty, every grace
Which other females share,
Adorned thy mind, thy voice, thy face,
Thou fairest of the fair!
Amidst the general distress
Oh! let a friend his grief express.

But whilst, alas! each mortal mourns,
Rejoice, ye heavenly choir;
To your embraces she returns,
And, with her social lyre,
Eliza now resumes her seat
And makes your harmony complete."

The translator quite misses the allusion to her sister. In Felix Farley's *Bristol Journal* of July 14 appeared some conventional lines of commemoration:—

"Ah, pay the tribute of a tender tear,
As o'er those salutary springs you bend,
To her whom, late to every heart most dear,
No stream could save, no medicine could befriend.

Might virtue stay the clay-cold hand of Death,
Might beauty, elegance, the foe disarm,
Eliza had not yet resigned her breath,
Still had she lived, and still retained each charm.

For me, who ne'er like Sheridan have loved,
Yet oft in others' sorrows take a part,
Well can I guess (altho' I ne'er have proved)
What 'tis to lose the partner of one's heart.

Yet while reclining o'er Eliza's urn,
Should Albion's welfare claim a Patriot's care
Swift let him to his guardian charge return,
And in the arduous tasks of Duty share,"

and so forth; cf. Dufferin Papers. William Linley, however, now in

all was over and lingered long in prayer and silence, has been already told.[1] He stayed alone with his son for a few days, almost dreading to desert the spot. Then he joined Mrs. Canning and the Leighs at Bath. In July Mrs. Canning accompanied him to Isleworth, leaving him with his children shortly afterwards.

"He suffered a great deal," she records, "in returning the same road, and was most dreadfully agitated on his arrival at Isleworth. His grief is deep and sincere, and I am sure will be lasting. He is in very good spirits and at times is even cheerful, but the moment he is left alone he feels all the anguish of sorrow and regret. The dear little girl is the greatest comfort to him. He cannot bear to be a moment without her. . . . Tom behaves with constant and tender attention to his father." Sheridan's agonies were great, he was heard sobbing and moaning the whole night long; Smyth relates that even two years afterwards he could not hear Jane Linley sing without exclaiming 'Oh heavens! if you had heard Mrs. Sheridan sing that song!"; and Kelly saw him cry like a child as he sang to him, "They bore her to her grassy grave." While his wound was yet raw, Sheridan composed some tender lines which the same Kelly picked up under the table in his room and set to music. Sheridan was musing on the springtide of his courtship, and he

India, composed a long and pathetic elegy. The three last stanzas may be quoted:—

"When at last—ah! then when hope had flown,
Thy mind unchanged, its best monition gave,
It seemed to speak a lesson scarce its own,
To breathe a purity beyond the grave.

That lesson, fixed for ever in my breast,
Shall teach me now my sorrows to suppress;
Drive feverish fancies from my couch of rest,
And picture brighter scenes to soothe and bless.

So shall my soul, resigned to Heaven's decree,
To virtue's tranquil meed once more aspire,
Nor will my thoughts, though fondly turned to thee,
Bid pleasure leave me, and be mute my lyre."

[1] Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 110.

told his second wife that "the first spring day makes me melancholy always, for a particular reason." How like to Thackeray's ballad-vein are the verses which run as follows :—[1]

"No more shall the spring my lost treasure restore;
Uncheered, I still wander alone,
And, sunk in dejection, for ever deplore
The sweets of the days that are gone.

While the sun, as it rises, to others shines bright,
I think how it formerly shone;
While others cull blossoms, I find but a blight,
And I sigh for the days that are gone.

I stray where the dew falls through moon-lighted groves,
And list to the nightingale's song;
Her plaints still remind me of long-vanished loves,
And the sweets of the days that are gone.

Each dew-drop that steals from the dark eye of night
Is a tear for the bliss that is flown;
While others cull blossoms, I find but a blight,
And I sigh for the days that are gone."[2]

He made much of those whom his wife had loved and who had best loved her. Linley soon came down to Isleworth; and Mrs. Canning, who had returned to comfort Sheridan, writes that he seemed "more his child than any one of his own." It was at this time too that Sheridan engaged the meddlesome Smyth (afterwards professor of history) to be tutor to his son. He threw himself into his work with redoubled energy to efface the grief which agonised him.

Yet Sheridan was a sentimentalist, and his emotions were moods. Only a few months elapsed before he fêted Pamela;[3] only three years more, and with romantic fervour, he had taken a young girl for his second wife.

Another act, however, of this deep tragedy remained. Eighteen months later the little girl who reminded him of her mother,

[1] Sheridan MSS. Sheridan to his second wife, April 12, 1797 (cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 202). Rae points out Sheridan's comment.

[2] *Ibid.*, citing Kelley's "Reminiscences," but in my edition of them I cannot find the verses, which however are manifestly Sheridan's.

[3] In Eg. MS. 1975 are cuttings describing this "elegant" *fête*, which six hundred persons attended.

and who alone reconciled him to existence, rejoined her. He had brought the children to stay with Mrs. Canning, in a small house rented by him at Wanstead in Essex.[1] Mrs. Canning had solemnly promised her dying friend that she would bring up her Mary. Towards the close of October,[2] a large party of young people were assembled at a dance for Tom's benefit, when the disaster happened. Mrs. Canning, after relating how gentle the host was and considerate, "doing the honours," "filling her place so well, . . . attentive to everybody and everything, though grave and thoughtful," thus gives the catastrophe:—

"We were all in the height of our merriment, he himself remarkably cheerful and partaking of the amusements, when the alarm was given, that the dear little angel was dying! It is impossible to describe the confusion and horror of the scene: he was quite frantic, and I knew not what to do. Happily there were present several kind good-natured men who had their recollection, and pointed out what should be done. We very soon had every possible assistance, and for a short time we had some hope that the precious life would have been spared to us—but that was soon at an end!

"The dear babe never throve to my satisfaction: she was small and delicate beyond imagination, and gave very little expectation of long life; but she had visibly declined during the last month. . . . Mr. Sheridan made himself very miserable at first from an apprehension that she had been neglected or mismanaged; but I trust he is perfectly convinced that this was not the case. He was severely afflicted at first. The dear babe's resemblance to her mother, after her death, was so much more striking that it was impossible to see her without recalling every circumstance of that afflicting scene, and he was constantly in the room indulging the sad remembrance. In this manner he indulged his feelings for four or five days; then

[1] It belonged to Mr. Wellesley Pole Long.

[2] Cf. the cuttings in Eg. MS. 1975. The death of Sheridan's infant daughter, aged eighteen months, is chronicled as "on Sunday last." Smyth notes how extravagant Sheridan had been over the child's attire.

having indispensable business, he was obliged to go to London, from whence he returned on Sunday, apparently in good spirits and as well as usual. But however he may assume the appearance of ease or cheerfulness, his heart is not of a nature to be quickly reconciled to the loss of anything he loves. He suffers deeply and secretly, and I daresay he will long and bitterly lament both mother and child."[1]

Many and striking condolences commemorated both these occasions: Tickell and Alicia indited letters honouring the man, and pointing out silver linings within the cloud. Poignantly as Sheridan grieved, he never lost hope. The hand of Fate lay heavy on him indeed, and henceforward a distinct dividing line can be marked. For the future his restraint is less, and more and more he abandons himself to the fatal incitements of drink. Some of his greatest political feats were in store; anguish urged him to effort. But the light had gone out of his life, and though in a foolhardy renewal of youth he contracted fresh ties, the old, the romantic Sheridan had vanished.

[1] Moore, Vol. II., pp. 173, 174.

## CHAPTER X

### TO THE MUTINY OF THE NORE

(February, 1793—June, 1797)

"The Water-world, though not the property, is the Manor of the British Empire, and over that we still stalk triumphant."—SHERIDAN, *Notes for a speech against Napoleon.*

THE country was by no means at one when Pitt joined issue with Jacobinism. Many thought the stroke of 1793 premature, and the allies were considered as not only doubtful but dangerous. True, the massacres of the *noblesse*, the arrests, as a secret agent informed the Duchess of Devonshire, of almost every Parisian who "wore a clean shirt," the execution by ruffians of their hapless King and Queen, had inspired Europe with horror. True, also, the French proclamation in the preceding November that their new-found creed must be propagated with Mahomedan zeal, had provoked a feeling which France anticipated by declaring war. But Pitt acted in haste; delay would have offered opportunity. A neutral Britain might soon have put her weight into the scale, and have avoided a state of things which enabled her enemy to throw down the challenge. Fox and Sheridan called Pitt's hurried campaign "a war of opinion," though they must have known that on such a war France deliberately embarked. But they were right in deprecating the moment which Pitt had chosen for conflict—a moment which interrupted the course of progress, saddled the country with unexampled burdens, and spread misery to Ireland. Had Mirabeau lived, the issues might have been different; had Napoleon never been born, the war could not have been prolonged. But one thing all these statesmen failed to perceive—the invincible power of a nation united against foreign aggression. This it was that had sealed

the doom of a weak but well-meaning King. And it was this that, as if by miracle, bred generals, organisers, and heroes out of a ruthless and brutal mob. Pitt, who in 1792 had looked forward to a long vista of peace, now fancied that one campaign would restore the Bourbons, though afterwards he denied this aim, and only demanded some "stable" government.[1] Burke thought France bankrupt and blotted from the map. Fox and Sheridan alone foresaw the length and strength of the struggle, though even they never anticipated the imminence of a new Iliad. They welcomed the throes of emancipation. Amid all the immoral orgy, they only discerned the moral force. France was one, France was free.

Nor was Pitt in 1793 quite so secure as he had been in 1789. The Russian imbroglio, the narrow escape from a Spanish war, the menace of the King's lunacy, had weakened confidence. There had been fresh talk of a junction between Fox and Pitt,[2] and it has been already pointed out that Sheridan himself had been approached.[3] Had he complied, he might have left Fox, and joined Pitt, as some of his party had done, and many more were ready to do. But despite Fox's jealous suspicions, nothing was ever further from Sheridan's wishes. Amid all his vagaries, an extreme Whig he was, an extreme Whig he remained. Not all the wealth of all the Indies would tempt the stout controverter of Burke to cross over to Pitt, though Burke now taunted the Opposition remnant as a "phalanx."

The Duke of Brunswick published his manifesto, on November 5 the battle of Jemappes was fought, and on the same day Burke finished his essay entitled "Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs," in which he urged

[1] In 1794 Pitt declared England's object to be "the destruction of the French Government."

[2] It was said that they had an interview "in which an objection was raised to Mr. Sheridan by Mr. Pitt, and that Mr. Fox honourably adhered to his political friend." But the real reason for the breakdown of the negotiation was this: that Fox insisted that Pitt should quit the Treasury in favour of Lord Fitzwilliam. Cf. Russell's "Life" of Fox, Vol. II., p. 289.

[3] Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., pp. 39 and 40.

most vehemently that England must be "the soul" of any confederacy against France. The French marched on Brussels; each city in the Netherlands, except Luxembourg, was soon reduced, Holland was threatened, the navigation of the Scheldt was to be opened, and the British ministry resolved on war. Every tyrant's throne shook in Europe.

But before definite hostilities broke out, Fox moved to send a minister to treat with the provisional government in Paris. Windham ironically asked if Fox was the ambassador-designate, and Lord Sheffield avowed himself ashamed of the enthusiasm once felt for the British Jacobin. Sheridan made a big speech. Pitt was absent, and Burke remarked on the impropriety of discussing the matter till he returned.

"This," urged Sheridan, "was a tender respect to the dignity of office in the right honourable gentleman, but he must be permitted to say that the representation of the country was indeed placed in a degraded light, if it was to be maintained that the great council of the nation was not in this momentous crisis a competent court to discuss the dearest interests of the people unless a certain minister were present." What exertion that he could have furnished had been left unsupplied? Not an atom of information (it was Pitt's habit) could any present member of the Government furnish. It was alleged that England was insurgent. "Doubtless, therefore, the insurrection was a secret deposited in the breast of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he had taken in his pocket all the proofs, to assist his election at Cambridge." Was it absurd to try a negotiation for peace before we plunged into the horrors of war? A terrible fate hung over the French monarch which might still be averted if we ceased to irritate France. It had been said that by treating with the French we should be supplicating forbearance. Was "petition" then the sole alternative to war? Had we petitioned Spain in the affairs of Nootka Sound, or France in 1787, during the dispute regarding this very Holland—for France now claimed to set free the Scheldt? Or was the First Minister so "meek, pliant, and bending," that he could not "assume a lofty tone or a haughty air for any

purpose"? Then Sheridan dealt with Windham's argument that "moral propriety precluded any negotiation with France, which, if it ever happened, should be a thing not of choice but necessity." But some time or other France must be treated with, for "eternal war or the extirpation of the nation was not yet avowed by anyone." "Happy, dignified opportunity to treat when we should be completely at their mercy; unquestionably we should then be justified, and certainly we should be undone." To his mind the sole ground for war "must be the defence of the country and the Constitution"; for that purpose he would support the executive government, "in whatever hands it might be reposed." Not one drop of British blood ought to be shed to restore an obsolete despotism. "The real object of this war was one thing; the fiery declaration which was to whet our valour was another." Mr. Burke had warned the House to be tender in advising the King as to the exercise of his prerogative, yet it had been usurped by declaring the nation to be actually in arms. At the very moment, too, when the minister deprecated one grain of compromise, he "was actually negotiating not only through Holland, but directly with agents from the French Executive Council." If he should tell the House that the issue was favourable, and that Britain might adhere to an applauded neutrality, were we to detest his peace and brand him as the duper of his King? As for the plea that all peace-endeavours must fail, because Dumouriez had been ordered to open the Scheldt, dates easily refuted it: these instructions preceded the knowledge of our resolve to support the States-General at Paris. Why had no representation on the subject been made to the French? In 1785, when the Emperor seized the Scheldt, the French determination to support Holland had been subsequently notified to him, and negotiation had disarmed force. But now, if a real war were really purposed, our preparations ought to be instant and vigorous. "The French had been uniformly partial, and even prejudiced in English favour. What manly sense, what united feeling communicating with them might have done, above all, what fair truth and plain dealing might have effected, he

believed it was hard to calculate. But to withhold all these from that nation by our hollow neutrality would prove, he felt certain, an error ever to be lamented."[1] On February 7 of the next year he loudly complained once more that Pitt burked information, and for many years it was true that the proud minister claimed a blank cheque of confidence and disdained to impart the secret knowledge which prompted his action.

This long speech of Sheridan's only preluded a great one which dared Burke's vaticinations *à l'outrance*. For Burke predicted ruin, and played the part of Cassandra on the Westminster ramparts. Shortly earlier—on the second reading of the Bill for preventing an asylum for aliens in the home of liberty—he had cast down his Birmingham dagger on the floor of the House to point the machinations of treason, while Sheridan had asked with a smile why the spoon and fork were missing from this theatrical cutlery. And next day, when the man whom Burke had charged with manufacturing the weapons called to remonstrate on his gross exaggerations, "Get out of my house; get out of my house," had been the patriot's infuriated reply.

Sheridan's oration was delivered on February 12, when Pitt moved that an humble address should be presented to His Majesty, of national accord in the necessity for meeting the French acts of aggression. Fox met it by an amendment expressing concern at hostile acts against Britain, the Commons' resolve to maintain the honour of Great Britain and to "vindicate the rights of the people" by the support of "a brave and loyal" nation, either in war or in "such other exertions" as might induce France to consent to "terms of pacification" consistent with national honour. Fox led the way; Sheridan rose to risk a fresh duel with Burke.

He began by defending Fox against Burke's "ungoverned bitterness and spleen towards the man whom he still, occasionally, professed so much to respect." Burke had twitted their sparse ranks as "a phalanx," yet he called Fox's

[1] Cf. Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 133—140, Speech on Fox's motions for sending a minister to Paris, December 15, 1792. On December 20 he added that Burke insisted on a "volunteer Crusade of Vengeance"; cf. *ibid.*, p. 143.

amendment a "stratagem" to rally that phalanx together, and "to make up for the smallness of their numbers by the contrariety of their opinions." Surely, laughed Sheridan, this was an odd definition of a word that implied compactness. As for stratagem, who less prone to it than Fox? Windham, Pitt's future War Secretary, whom Sheridan described as the sport of fastidious paradox—Windham, Dr. Johnson's pupil, the sincere casuist who coddled his conscience—had borne Burke out. But Windham, now urged Sheridan, "was sometimes apt to spin a little too fine."

Burke had further reproached Fox for failing to advert on the alarming growth of French power. How did this tally, however, with Burke's opinion that France was blotted out from the map of Europe? And were the petty aggressions of the French Assembly against us the true cause of this war? No. It was a war against principles, as Pitt must own. Sheridan reprobated Burke's ground, but even if his ground were proved, his censure must extend to Pitt, who discussed these principles on Fox's footing, though he differed in his deductions. It was therefore "unmanly and unwarranted" in the minister "to sit still and listen to these inflammatory rants, and even to cheer the war-song of this honourable gentleman:—

'Quo non præstantior ullus
Aere ciere viros, Martemque accendere cantu,'[1]

though at the same moment he knew, and had even just asserted, that "the war was undertaken upon principles and for purposes, diametrically opposite to those upon which he suffered the House to be heated and misled by a spirit of vengeance and quixotism, which it was his duty to oppose and restrain."

Every prejudice that could be imported from the "wrong-headed or disgusting things said or written by individuals in France," "all the cruel and unjust proceedings against the late unfortunate monarch," had been foisted by Burke into the

[1] "Than whom none better knew the way
To rouse with song and cymbals to the fray."

controversy. And then the House was assured that at "an idle dinner of English and others at White's in Paris" Fox's health and his own had been drunk. "The anecdote," trifling in itself, "wanted only one little ingredient to produce possibly some effect, namely, fact." The toast had not been given, for "though friends to the reform of abuses they were considered expressly as against all idea of Revolution in England, and known to be attached to the form of the existing Constitution."

Burke had laid stress on French ambition, but, said Sheridan, he should have been more careful in details. He had ascribed "a proposition," adopted by the Convention, and fixing the boundaries of the future as the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the Ocean, to Danton, the Minister of Justice. Danton was not that great personage, the Minister of Justice; if he had been he could not have been a member of the Convention, and so far from this proposition having been "adopted," it had been scarcely entertained. But then, religion invoked vengeance upon France. None, Sheridan protested, referring to the Propagandists, realised more strongly than he did, the evils and perils of proselytising infidelity. But was atheism a consequence of this Revolution? "The philosophers had corrupted and perverted the minds of the people, but when did the precepts or perversions of philosophy ever begin their effects at the root of the tree and afterwards rise to the towering branches? Were the common and ignorant people ever the first disciples of philosophy, and did *they* make proselytes of the higher and most enlightened orders?" The general atheism, he contended, did small honour to the higher orders of the clergy, and all the rank and fashion now emigrating to England were disciples of Rousseau and Voltaire. Here Sheridan was in the right.

Burke had further pressed the need of an alliance with the Emperor, while Dundas looked for a league of Europe. But this appeared to contradict their chief's position. We were taking the field, cried Pitt, "against the excesses and licentiousness of liberty," but these potentates had taken the field "against liberty itself." "The effect of a real co-operation would be a more fatal revolt than ever prejudice could

paint in the case of France—a revolution in the political morals of England, and the downfall of that freedom which was the true foundation of our power, prosperity and glory. Sooner than league with such allies, sooner than pledge our blood and treasure to such purposes, he would almost prefer to see England fight France single-handed. He feared the enemy less than our allies. He disliked the cause of war, but he abhorred the company of our intended colleagues. . . . Had Burke forgotten his own eulogy of the Polish revolution? 'That glorious event,' he had once termed it, 'which had bettered the condition of every man there from the prince to the peasant, and had rescued millions . . . from actual chains and even personal bondage.' Who had marred this lovely prospect? . . . Who had hypocritically first approved the Revolution . . . and had now marched troops to stifle the groans of those who dared even to murmur at its destruction? These allies, these chosen associates and bosom counsellors in the future efforts of this deluded nation. . . . Had Burke ever arraigned these things? . . . Why had he never come to brandish in that house a Russian dagger, red in the heart's blood of the free constitution of Poland? No, not a word or a sigh; not an ejaculation for the ruin of all he had held up to the world as a model for reverence and imitation! In his heart is a record of brass for every error and excess of liberty, but on his tongue is a sponge to blot out the foulest crimes and blackest treacheries of despotism."

Allowance, he urged, must be made for the novelty of the situation. It was a narrow view which would ascribe the French orgies to any other cause but the despotism which degrades and depraves human nature, rendering it, on the first recovery of its rights, unfit for the exercise of them:—

"But was the inference to be that those who had long been slaves ought therefore to remain in servitude for ever? . . . No; the lesson ought to be a tenfold horror of the despotism which had so profaned and changed the nature of social men; and a more jealous apprehension of withholding rights and liberty from our fellow-creatures, because in so doing we risked

and became responsible for the bitter consequences. . . . After all, no precautions of craft and fraud can suppress or alter this eternal truth—that liberty is the birthright of man, and whatever opposes his possession of it is a sacrilegious usurpation."[1]

Fiercer encounters ensued. Sheridan's cause of contention was double—a war which halted, even failed, until the stinted navy could triumph, and a disaffection at home minimised by him and Fox, but exaggerated by Pitt, who was driven into an inquisitorial system of coercion. The truth lay between the two extremes. Undoubtedly a traitorous correspondence existed between the French leaders and some of the English Radicals, but the results seemed small, and contingencies were more to be dreaded than facts. The Marquis of Buckingham himself made light of these commotions.[2] Two years later, and amid fresh developments, Sheridan thus frankly stated his views to the House: "That there are among some of the members of those societies dispositions hostile to the established Constitution, I will not deny; a few desperate and abandoned individuals will always exist in every community. That there have likewise been some who have shown their attachment to French principles, or rather have gratified their own absurd vanity by the adoption of French phrases, I am equally prepared to admit. . . . But what has been the consequence? That these infatuated men have shown themselves as ignorant of the genius of the English character and of the rooted attachment to the Constitution as ministers themselves when they apprehended any danger from those proceedings."[3]

On March 4, 1793, Sheridan made his motion regarding "the existence of seditious practices" in a speech which displayed his full powers, and this speech may stand for many others

[1] Speech of February 12, 1793, Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 147–157.

[2] Cf. Hist. Man. Comm., Dropmore Papers.

[3] Speech on the Treason and Sedition Bills, December 3, 1795. Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 11. There is an interesting *précis* of the proceedings of these societies and that of the United Irishmen, in the "Annual Register" for 1799, app. to "Chronicle," pp. 154—182.

delivered in days when the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and free-thinkers and free-writers were brought to book by ministers intent on gagging opinion.[1]

There were, said Sheridan, three points of view entertained on this subject. The first was that the danger was real, the second that it was a false alarm, the third that the ministry intended a system which should delude the sense and sap the spirit of the country.

Granting the first position, then a committee of inquiry ought to follow; granting the second, the same precaution would be equally indispensable; granting the third, a committee of inquiry would be indispensable.

If treason stalked abroad, if the associations for popular reform were those of republicans and levellers, if conspiracy was rampant, very little was visible. Paine had published a book; someone had written "The Jockey Club,"[2] another had shouted "What care I for the King's birthday?" But had anything actually happened, and were the ministers who alarmed the country themselves alarmed? How had Pitt acted?

"In the course of the summer he proceeded with due solemnity

[1] In May, 1794, Sheridan delivered three strong speeches on this topic; cf. Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 378—390. On January 5, 1795, speaking again on the subject, he reminded the House that Chatham, when asked whether he would submit to a tyranny of forty days, answered, "No; he could not consent that the people of England should be fettered and shackled even for an hour"; cf. *ibid.*, p. 439. Speaking again on the Treason and Sedition Bills on November 17, 1795, Sheridan stoutly denied that the Corresponding Society was treasonous, though he admitted that it might be responsible for some disaffection. This, however, he attributed "to the general state of pressure arising from the war, to the apprehension of approaching scarcity, and in some instances, to the actual ravages of famine"; cf. *ibid.*, p. 537. On this occasion Wilberforce supported Pitt, and immediately posted up to York, where he delivered an inflammatory harangue in favour of the minister's principles.

[2] A pamphlet against royalty in connection with the Prince of Wales's suspected turf transactions, of which his jockey Sam Chiffney had published a defence. In 1790 the Prince was actually warned off the course. It seems likely that he was more a victim than an offender. Sheridan defended him. Among documents mentioned in the Sheridan MSS. as retained by Moore was some account of this defence, which has vanished.

to take the weight on himself of the laborious office of Warden of the Cinque Ports. He had conducted himself in a manner equally pleasing to his hosts and his guests, and had returned to town without any great apprehension of danger, but as the meeting of Parliament approached, things became more and more alarming, until at last the whole country was said to be threatened with destruction." He was convinced that this panic was manufactured; indeed, a general panic was already created by phantoms and imaginary evils. "It had always been so in the case of armies. . . . He believed that there was not once to be found in history a case in which the panic of an army had proceeded from real danger; it always proceeded either from accident or some stratagem of the enemy. Indeed, the thing bore evidence for itself; had the danger been real, there must have been a difference of opinion as to the amount of it, for while there was a difference in the size and character of the understandings of men there must be a difference in their opinions." But those who believed in these alleged seditions, believed everything reported, "and that of itself proved the fallacy. There were numerous instances recorded both in prose and verse where the nations had been misled and had acted upon such false alarms . . . in which a panic had been communicated by one class of men to the other." The Latin quotation was inevitable:—

"—Sic quisque pavendo
Dat vires famæ: nulloque auctore malorum,
Quæ finxere timent. Nec solum vulgus inani
Pereussum terrore pavet; sed curia et ipsi
Sedibus exituere patres, invisaque belli
Consulibus fugiens mandat decreta senetus." [1]

But had the ministers chosen the third position, and consti-

[1] "Thus rumour gathers force from dread,
And flight adopts what fancy bred.
Nor only is the rabble scared,
But reverend senates thus have fared
And, flying, trumpet blasts have blown
For foes unseen and ills unknown."

tuted panic a means of popularising the war? He would be sorry to think so. But at least, had they inflamed the country? Pitt himself had said that the nation reproached the Government for supineness rather than blamed it for promptitude. The lamentable execution of the French King had been turned into fuel to the fire, but all who loved freedom must ever deplore that transaction "because by one act they had armed despotism and given a fatal blow to the general interests of mankind." Such was his opinion now and such it always had been on that subject.

Sheridan proceeded to indulge his humour. Was there still another ministerial motive, that of diverting public attention from the question of parliamentary reform? This did, he believed, enter into their plans. The Duke of Richmond had once descried nothing but danger in the absence of such a reform. But of late he had so elevated himself on fortifications of his own erecting, and had given such a range to his great power of discernment, that he could now discover plots, conspiracies, and treasons under the garb of a parliamentary or of any other reform. The alarm had been sounded with great pomp and form on Saturday morning. At night all the mail-coaches were stopped; the Duke stationed himself, "among other curiosities," at the Tower.[1] A great municipal officer too had made an experiment exceedingly beneficial to the people of this country—he meant the Lord Mayor of London, who had discovered that at the "King's Arms" in Cornhill was a debating society, where principles of the most dangerous tendency were propagated, where people went to buy treason at sixpence a head, and where it was retailed to them by the glimmering of an inch of candle, and five minutes, to be measured by the glass, were allowed to each traitor to perform his part in overturning the State. And yet, coarse and ridiculous as they were, these things had their effect with the public for a time, and certainly did create a general impression of fear. He went on to deride

[1] Sheridan referred again to these matters on January 5, 1795; cf. Speeches, Vol. II., p. 447.

kindred mare's-nests. Not a soul had been charged with treason. "The whole was a miserable fabrication to deceive the credulous. Suspicion indeed had been entertained: many letters, he believed, had been stopped at the post-office, and he had no doubt that some of his were among the number. He did not wish to speak of himself, but hints had been thrown out of correspondence with foreign Powers. All he could say was that if the Government should think it worth their while, he should not have the slightest objection to publish every letter of his on politics. He had drawn up a paper relative to the trial of the late King of France. It was one that he would show everywhere and on any occasion, and he only wished that no necessity could have existed for declaring how much he abhorred the principle of the decree of November 19 last, issued by the National Convention. Nothing, he hoped, would deter ministers from one day publishing his sentiments, of which doubtless they had preserved copies.

"Then the Government had contributed to the general scare by advertising a Mr. John Frost and Captain Perry. People were told that these two gentlemen were traitors, and a hundred pounds reward was offered for their apprehension. The former of them was on bail and awaiting trial; the latter was only charged with having printed on reform in a newspaper what Pitt himself had spoken in the House. Here, surely, was evidence of 'a system of delusion.' And more, a story had been trumped up of a French plot for taking the Tower; the whole of our constitution was to be overturned, and the royal family murdered; that most execrable character Marat was to be placed at the head of this conspiracy. And as if this fiction were not enough, French hirelings were to destroy the people, and it was even rumoured that attempts had been made to poison the New River. The proprietors of that corporation had suffered such hardship that they had to repudiate the falsehood in the journals. Furthermore, a portion of the Press, instructed by the ministers, retailed daily abuse of everything connected with France," and Sheridan quoted the Latin

motto of the *Sun* newspaper, adding a succeeding line which made for his point:—

> "Solem quis dicere falsum
> Audeat? Ille iterum cæcos instare tumultus
> Sæpe monet, fraudemque et operta tumescere bella."[1]

Sheridan made merry over examples. An insurrection had been scented at Edinburgh, which was to happen by corrupting the soldiers. The "corruption," however, resolved itself into a sixpence expended for porter. Scotsmen had burned Dundas in effigy, which perhaps accounted for the bias evident in that statesman's recital of the supposed tumult. A ruffian named Rotundo was said to have escaped from France on a sanguinary mission to England, but he was proved to have been a mere fugitive from justice. It was bruited that seditious mercenaries were being drilled and disciplined by a sergeant in a brown coat. Then there had been the planting in Dundee of a tree of liberty. But this was like "Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane," for the tremendous event seemed to have originated in a few schoolboys, and chastisement had restored them to loyalty and averted a downfall of the Constitution. Next, somebody, in a quite indefensible fit of humour, had acquainted Sir Charles Yonge of an *émeute* at Salisbury: the city was undisturbed. As for the Shields uprising, troops had been dispatched only to find these rebels voluntarily assisting to get off a King's ship that had run aground. A trifle had been magnified into a revolt at Yarmouth. No public discontent had been proved, and the public mind should be quieted by an official inquiry. Then there were addresses from pot-house patriots to the National Convention: a long list of them had been made under the auspices of the Treasury. "One was signed by Mr. Hardy, an honest shoemaker, who little dreamed, God help him, how near he had been to overturning the Constitution. Such chimeras caused real hardship

[1] "Who dares to call the sun
False harbinger? yet oft it will forerun
The threat of tumults blind, and plots accurst,
And strifes that swell to warfare ere they burst."

to the innocent; publicans had been warned as to conversations in tap-rooms, and even interrogated as to what papers they took in:—'Do you take in the *Morning Chronicle* or *Post?*' —'Yes, sir'—'Take care there is no sedition in it: for if there is you are liable to punishment.' A strong instance in point had arisen in the case of the 'Unicorn' in Covent Garden, where an innocent society assembled to discuss reform. The magistrate was satisfied, yet he had to caution the owner against any further meetings, lest they might offend the sensitiveness of the higher powers. The same nonsense had distinguished projected prosecutions of booksellers for selling unexpurgated editions of Paine's 'Rights of Man.' Attorneys had been suborned as spies in this business,[1] yet once none had launched out for parliamentary reform more freely than Pitt and the Duke of Richmond, or more grossly against monarchs than Burke. In the zeal against private inquiry Protestant dissenters had even been represented as unworthy the name of fellow-Christians. Riots had disgraced Birmingham and Cambridge, but they were due to the manipulated panic. It was owing to that panic that . . . Mr. Windham had brought his mind to approve what his heart had for years abhorred—the erection of barracks. It was owing to that panic that that right honourable gentleman had prevailed upon himself to support a minister because he had a bad opinion of him. It was owing to that panic that Lord Loughborough in the other House had given his disinterested support to Government and had eventually accepted the seals of an administration which he had reprobated from its commencement." To that panic it was owing that Burke had lost all his fine taste and "had become the slave of the most

[1] On Pitt's spying system Sheridan delivered himself in January, 1795: "I will not say that there is no Government in Europe which does not need the assistance of spies, but I will affirm that the Government which avails itself of such support does not exist for the happiness of the people. . . . It resembles in its operation the conduct of the father of all spies and informers, the devil, who introduced himself into Paradise not only to inform his own pandemonium of the state of that region, but to deceive and betray the inhabitants." Cf. Speeches, Vol. II., p. 450.

ridiculous pantomimic trick, . . . that he carried about with him daggers and knives to assist him in efforts of description." Through panic again, "the milk of the Christian religion had lost its mildness," as Windham's farewell letter to the Whig Club demonstrated to the full. Panic was "the root of all these evils, and party warfare had been exacerbated by Burke, who, protesting that he belonged to no party, had gone from the living Whigs to the dead." Sheridan would not (and he certainly did not) spare any whose conduct seemed calculated to throw discredit on the principles of his friends.[1]

Still a third speech out of many claims a notice before the Nore mutiny, and it deserves to be quoted as one of the most trenchant that Sheridan ever delivered. Like the rest, it concerned the French Revolution, and it took place on the occasion of the debate on the King's address in 1794 at the opening of the January session. Lord Mornington had pleaded in a long and laboured discourse for the continuance of the war. Sheridan's answer is the sole instance of revision that survives among his papers. The speech amounts even in its condensed and printed form to no fewer than thirty pages, and some of its periods are involved, but it presents almost the best example of Sheridan's general standpoint and attitude, while it certainly impressed both the House and the country as statesmanlike. He spoke of the allies and their compact at Pilnitz, much as Gladstone spoke when he looked back on the "Holy Alliance," or when he uttered the warning, "Hands off, Austria." Sheridan had been well primed from France before he delivered this oration.[2]

He began by exposing some of Lord Mornington's fallacies, and by traversing his statement that this war had been based on the

[1] Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 161—178.

[2] Cf. Hist. Man. Comm., Dropmore Papers, Vol. II., p. 458—an enclosure by Francis Drake to Lord Grenville:—"Que d'une part on est assuré que M. Sheridan prouvera par les documents les plus surs fournis de ses bureaux, et qui lui parviendront par la voie la plus directe (car on ne peut pas nouer aucune relation immediate avec lui), que cette guerre ne regarde en rien les allies de l'Angleterre; que. suivant les circonstances, la Convention pouvra se conder la verité de cette proposition par les declarations qui la laisseront sans réplique," etc.

enormities which had just been recited from a voluminous pamphlet by Brissot. Had we now to dread a transfer of Gallic frenzy to other countries? No; "wild and unsettled" as the sudden grasp of power had made the French Government, "the surrounding States had goaded them into a still more savage state of madness, fury, and desperation. We had unsettled their reason, we now reviled their insanity. . . . We baited them like wild beasts until at length we made them so." The royal conspirators against the rights of nations "had in truth to answer for all the additional misery, horrors, and iniquity which had since disgraced and incensed humanity."

"Such has been your conduct towards France," he concluded, "that you have created the passions which you persecute. You mark a nation to be cut off from the world; you covenant for their extermination; you swear to hunt them in their inmost recesses; you load them with every species of execration. And now you come forth with whining declamations on the horror of their turning upon you with the fury which you inspired."

He analysed Brissot's pages, and he contrasted the effects of Jacobinism on America with its influence on England, in a passage which has been cited at the opening of this work. The war had been termed one of defence and of necessity; if so, self-defence and necessity must continue it. The ministers in vain tried to evade the question of peace by arguing that it was not in our power. From this fallacy the public mind should be rescued. All the professed objects for which war was undertaken had been attained. Holland was safe, Brabant recovered, and France would now treat with us on the sole principle "of *being left to the exercise of their own will within their own boundaries.*" Let the experiment be made. And Sheridan demanded a plain answer to a plain question: Had France abstained from acts of aggression on England and Holland, should we have remained inactive spectators of the conflict? If not, he pointed out Pitt's dilemma. The war was being prolonged for the sake of abstractions.

"This war is called a war unlike all other wars that ever man was engaged in. It is a war, it seems, commenced on a different

principle, and carried on for a different purpose. . . . It is a war in which the interests of individual nations are absorbed in the wider consideration of the interest of mankind. It is a war in which personal provocation is lost in the outrage offered generally to civilised man. It is a war for the preservation of the possessions, the morals, and the religion of the world, . . . for the maintenance of human order and the existence of human society. Does he then mean to say that he would have sat still —that Great Britain would have sat still—with arms folded— and reclining in luxurious ease on her commercial couch, have remained an unconcerned spectator of this mighty conflict, leaving the cause of civil order, government, morality, religion and its God, to take care of itself,[1] or to owe its preservation to the mercenary exertions of German and Hungarian barbarians, provided only that France had not implicated Great Britain by a special offence, and forced us into this cause of divine and universal interest by the petty motive of a personal provocation? He will not tell us so: or if he does, to answer a momentary purpose, will he hold the same language to our allies? . . . Will he tell *them* that we are not volunteers in this cause—that we have no merit in having entered into it—that we are in confederacy with them only to resent a separate insult offered to ourselves, which redressed, our zeal in the cause, if not our engagements to continue in the alliance, must cease? Or if he would hold this language to these Powers,[2] will he repeat it to those lesser States whom we are hourly dragging into this perilous contest upon the only plea by which such an act of tyrannical compulsion can be attempted to be palliated, namely, that *a personal ground of complaint* against the French is not necessary to their enmity, but that since the league against that people is the cause of human nature itself, every country where human feelings exist has already received its provocation in the atrocities of this common enemy of human kind?" Sheridan showed that Prussia herself treated the war as one for England's

[1] Notes for this passage exist among the Sheridan MSS.

[2] Prussia and Austria.

interest, demanding English subsidies, and he challenged Pitt, who applauded the principles of English aggression, to deny that, in Prussia's purview, Great Britain was attacked.

And then he discussed the possibilities of peace. Pitt had changed his conditions precedent to peace. What did he now put forward? "A stable and responsible government." Could British arms effect this requisite?—could the present Government of France be altered? for its *form* was not for us to prescribe. "A stable government? Where then were the *men* that we hoped to see come forward?

"We commenced with reprobating and reviling Lafayette, Rochefoucault, and the whole party of reforming Royalists. Brissot and the tenth of August Republicans overthrew and destroyed that party. We may boast of having assisted Robespierre and Danton in the destruction of Brissot and those Republicans. Robespierre and Danton now possess the lead. Are you waiting till such men as Hebert and Chaumette shall have destroyed Robespierre and Danton? Would such a change," he urged with truth, "give you the stable responsibility and trustworthy government you desire, or do you see any class of men still under them, which, in the revolution of enormities, gives you a fairer promise of your object? No man will hold out such an expectation. Whence then can arise the sort of Government with whom you *would* condescend to treat? I affirm, from only one possible source: from a general reformation in the public mind of France, founded on a deep sense of their calamities and a just abhorrence of their past crimes. Then will cease their bloody, internal enmities, . . . the selfish, factious contests of their leaders, . . . their revolting system of plunder, rapine and impiety. Then, in other words, will be established their republic on the immortal and unconquerable principles of wisdom and of justice which, without diminishing the invincible enthusiasm which even now animates their military exertions, will supply those exertions with copious and imperishable resources; and then truly we shall have no objection to acknowledge them as a nation and to treat with them. Admirable prudence! Consummate policy! Whilst

the certain seeds of internal discord . . . are sown among them and are checked in their rank growth only by the counteraction of stronger feelings against the foreign enemies that surround them, we will not stoop to treat, because we cannot have *security* for the future. But if, fortunately, our perseverance in assailing them shall at length eradicate all that is vicious and ruinous in their internal system, strengthening, as at the same time it must, the energies and solidity of their Government, then our pride will abate, respectful negotiation will follow, and a happy peace may be concluded—a happy peace for the terms of which we must be left in future for ever at their mercy."[1]

At some length Sheridan reviewed the course of the war, and pointed out how weakly facts answered to the professed aims of the struggle. He dissected the internal condition of France. He examined the state of the grand alliance:—

"The force of Austria unbroken, though compelled to abandon Brabant; and the power of the veteran troops of Prussia absolutely untried, though the seasons and disease had induced them to retire from Champagne. What is their state now? Defeat has thinned their ranks, and disgrace has broken their spirit. They have been driven across the Rhine by French recruits like sheep before a lion's whelp, and that, not from the mishap of a single great action lost, but after a succession of bloody contests of unprecedented fury and obstinacy. Where now is the scientific confidence with which we were taught to regard the efforts of discipline and experience when opposed to all untrained multitudes and unpractised generals? The jargon

[1] Windham of course strongly opposed any peace with France, but even Windham wrote to Mrs. Crewe from Fulham on September 30, 1796: " . . . Yet this is the consummation, a consummation from which nothing but new wars can save us, what the booby politicians in this country are all wishing for and holding out as the only means by which our ruin is to be averted." Windham was still under Mrs. Crewe's spell. He thus concludes this letter, after a mention of Irish politics: "Farewell! and count upon me as your Redde-Cross Knight to the end of the adventure.

"'For knights in knightly deed should persevere,
And still continue what at first they were,
Continue, and persist in honour's fair career.'"

Cf. his "Diary," p. 352.

of professional pedantry is mute, and the plain sense of man is left to its own course." Neither the "valour and activity" of the Dutch, nor the Portuguese squadron, nor the "Indian States whom we have bribed or bullied into our cause," had made "any sensible impression." "Our great ally" the Russian Empress had contributed nothing to the common cause but "praises and prayers."

The present prosperity of France, it had been urged, was illogical. The French had no right to beat their enemies as they had done. "This," said Sheridan, "reminds me of the story of a tradesman who had a very admirable timepiece made by a person who had never learned the business, and neither knew it mechanically nor scientifically. A neighbouring clock-maker, exasperated at this intrusion of natural genius, took great pains to convince the owner that he ought to turn his clock out of doors. It was in vain that the man assured him that it went and struck truly; that he wound it up like other clocks, and that it told him the hour of the day precisely. The artist replied, 'that all this might be very true, but that he could demonstrate that it had no right to go like other clocks, for it was not made upon *sound principles*.' The contest ended by his cajoling the poor man to part with his timepiece, and to buy from him, at three times the cost, a clock that did not answer half as well."

Lord Mornington had instanced the ruin of French commerce, but "Perish our commerce, live our Constitution," was a watchword known in England. At any rate, France did not lack the sinews of war. If she was over-taxed, she submitted cheerfully to her burdens. Would such sacrifices appeal to pensioners and placemen at home? But ministers assured us that the war must be supported at any sacrifice and without a murmur. This gave Sheridan a fine opening for scorn:—

"The time is come when all honest and disinterested men should rally round the throne. For what, ye honest and disinterested men? To receive for your own private emolument a portion of those very taxes which you yourselves wring from the people on the pretence of saving them from the poverty

and distress which you say the enemy would inflict, but which you take care no enemy shall be able to aggravate. O shame, shame! Is this a time for selfish intrigue and the little dirty traffic in lucre and emolument? Does it suit the honour of a gentleman to ask at such a moment? Does it become the honesty of a minister to grant it? . . . Nay, even from those who seem to have no direct object of office or profit, what is the language which their actions speak? 'The throne is in danger, we will support the throne; but let us share the smiles of royalty.' 'The order of nobility is in danger, I will fight for nobility,' says the viscount, 'but my zeal would be greater if I were made an earl.' 'Rouse all the marquis within me,' exclaims the earl, 'and the peerage never turned forth a more undaunted champion in its cause than I shall prove.' 'Stain my green riband blue,' cries out the illustrious knight, 'and the fountain of honour will have a fast and faithful servant.' What are the people to think of our sincerity? what credit are they to give to our professions? . . . Is there nothing that whispers to the right honourable gentleman that the crisis is too big, that the times are too gigantic, to be ruled by the little, hackneyed, and every-day means of corruption? Or are we to believe that he has within himself a conscious feeling that disqualifies him from rebuking the ill-timed selfishness of his new allies? . . . Let him take care that the corruptions of the Government shall not have lost the public heart; that the example of selfishness in the few has not extinguished public spirit in the many. Let him not be too confident; his informers, his associations, his proclamations or prosecutions have driven from their post . . . those who lawfully watch the conduct of the King's servants in their stations and their own servants in this House." And then after long invectives against "the price of political apostasy," "No," exclaimed Sheridan; "it seems that from this side of the House alone the country could be properly served, or the favours of the Crown duly repaid."[1]

[1] These are only a few excerpts. Sheridan investigated also the blunders of the war, and he finally contrasted the "faction" of 1784 with the Foxite position of the moment. Cf. Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 245—276.

Sheridan always denied that the "rights of man" had caused the French Revolution, and he always blamed Pitt's terrorism of public opinion. In May, 1797, when Pitt extolled his conduct regarding the naval mutiny, Sheridan spoke vehemently for Grey's second motion for parliamentary reform; he had advocated it as vehemently in 1793, when Grey first moved in the question. Parliamentary reform was Sheridan's corollary of the "rights of man." And while Pitt ceased his early zeal for this cause, and even Fox abated his, Sheridan never relinquished his ardour. His peroration of 1797 contains such an interesting retrospect of his views before Napoleon had modified his outlook, that a citation here will be quite in keeping with the subject in hand. He was a Whig of the Revolution:—

"He was not much of an egotist, he said, nor was he out of that House an arrogant man. He was almost ashamed of the praise the minister had bestowed upon him to-day for merely doing his duty when he spoke of the sailors. He hoped and he trusted that, much calamity as the country feels, we should never bend our necks to an insolent foe but . . . defend our rights with our lives. He must be allowed to say another word about himself, as it was now necessary. He had been accused of wishing to join those who wished for anarchy. He would ask those who charged him with so foul a wish, what temptation he had to do so? What provocation had he, to excite any opposition against the aristocracy of the land or against its monarch? He had possessed at one time some confidence from the monarch while he filled an office of considerable trust. He had been treated with civility by many of the first families in this country. He knew no occasion he could have to regret the attention he had received in that House. He had no desire to break a lance with any orator in any other place. He therefore expected credit for sincerity, when he declared that he supported this motion from his heart, because he thought in his conscience it tended to restore to the people some of the purity of their original, excellent constitution, and to save the State from ruin."[1]

[1] May 26, 1797. Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 202. Sheridan was twitted for his change of front even earlier in a rhymed satire (rare, and absent

Three years went by, nor is there space to pursue Sheridan's activities. The war creaked and lumbered onwards, though in this year of 1794, the "Glorious first of June" cheered the nation and revived the ministry. Sheridan commemorated it by a light piece at Drury Lane. For the Quiberon disaster he blushed in a philippic which ranks among his best, and during the next year he pleaded eloquently for Lafayette, immured by the Austrians at Olmütz. He dealt again with the sordid burden of the Prince of Wales's debts. He urged reform, and pressed that Catholics should be eligible for army appointments. He re-criticised Pitt's loans, he re-censured the conduct of the allies and the subsidies lavished on them. He treated of the corn importation tax. He denounced the game laws, and the dog impost. In a series of speeches he discussed minutely and trenchantly the suspension of cash payments in March, 1797, by the Bank of England;[1] and here again in one material point he diverged from Fox. He approached all these subjects from the standpoint of the people; in each of them the non-privileged found themselves voiced by Sheridan.[2]

Naval affairs had long engaged him, and even in 1786 he had proved the seaman's friend. As recently as the January of 1795 he had gladly supported the ministry's efforts to increase the navy.[3] The spring of 1797 heard the first rumble of disaffection in the Channel fleet, despite Lord

from the British Museum)—"An Epistle from R-ch-d Br-ns-y Sh-d-n Esqre. to the Right Honourable H-n-y D-nd-s" (London. Printed for J. Owen, Piccadilly, 1796), which turns on the wit's convivial approaches to the Bacchus of Wimbledon. The following is a sample:—

> "Wonder not, sir, when now you learn from me
> That I'm the foe of Gallic anarchy,
> And blush to own that Freedom's sacred light,
> Which dawned on France, is turned to hellish night."

[1] Windham specially mentions Sheridan's motion on March 10, 1797, for paying off the debt to the Bank; cf. "Diary," p. 354.

[2] For some of these speeches cf. Sheridan's Speeches, Vol. II., pp. 393, 492, 517; Vol. III., pp. 70, 83, 100, 111, 122, 143.

[3] Speeches, Vol. II., p. 460.

St. Vincent's earlier victory, nor long after Nelson's earliest prowess had pierced the war-clouds with a ray of hope. That ray was fleeting. In 1796 Spain had joined France, and Bonaparte, who in 1793 had wrested Toulon from the Royalists, burst upon the world and swept through Italy. Within a year it was riddled with his republics, and Vienna lay prostrate at his feet. Ireland, already pro-Jacobin, was singled out for attack. Wolfe Tone, active in Paris, co-operated with Hoche, and but for mists the French marine would have landed in Bantry Bay. The British Government again left Ireland wholly undefended. And in 1797 a French force even attempted a descent on Wales.[1] It was a time of anxiety and suspense.

The two naval mutinies of 1797 illustrate with emphasis the incompetence of red tape and routine to cope with exceptional crises. Britain's empire over the seas was won in the teeth of Downing Street, and this rebellion on home waters would have been fatal, had Downing Street prevailed. While a supine Government wavered, Sheridan's perception and promptness may be said to have saved Britain's wooden walls, and they earned the gratitude of Pitt.

Lord Spencer, friendly to Sheridan, headed the Admiralty, but he was Downing Street incarnate. Already in March, petitions poured in from the sailors clamouring for an increase of their pay. Lord Howe, infirm in health, advanced in age, had retired to Bath and thought little of these communications. Lord Spencer slighted them. Yet, had Lord Howe recognised and dealt with the danger, it might have been averted, for the navy adored the man who just before his triumph, had replied to the crew clamouring for more grog, "Wait till it's over, and we'll all get drunk together."

In April the fleet at Spithead received orders to put to sea, but when Lord Bridport gave the signal to his flagship, the *Queen Charlotte*, the men ran up the shrouds and gave three cheers; those of the other vessels responded to the signal,

[1] Windham specially mentions the attempt on Fishguard in February, 1797; cf. his "Diary," p. 354.

and not an anchor was weighed. All command was wrested from the officers, delegates were appointed, and fresh petitions presented. The Board of Admiralty proceeded in solemn state to Portsmouth only to find the rebellion complete, under an organisation probably prompted by an English emissary from France. Higher pay was offered, but the delegates declined to treat till Parliament and the King had sanctioned and proclaimed the concessions. Incensed at their stubbornness, Admiral Gardner rashly seized one of the delegates by the collar and swore he would hang them and every fifth man in the fleet. The bloody standard was hoisted on the *Royal George*. Consternation ensued; Lord Bridport struck his flag, Lord Spencer wanted to board the *Queen Charlotte* and try the effect of his personal presence, but this was flatly vetoed as below the dignity of his office. Thereupon Downing Street, fussy and futile, marched back to its own place.

The insurgents loaded all the guns and ordered a regular watch. Lord Bridport, however, whom they called "their father and their friend," explained the circumstances and received permission to increase their pay. A temporary lull ensued, and the Admiral once more hoisted his flag. But the crew petitioned for fresh redress, and sent an ultimatum refusing to weigh anchor till the King's sign manual and "gracious" assent had been accorded.

This calm, however, did not last. The sailors mistrusted the Government. They did not believe that their wrongs would receive fair play. The insignia of rebellion were struck, and they proceeded with a squadron to St. Helens.

On May-day Fox pressed for information, but his grounds were those of economy alone. Pitt even burked the discussion, only promising that in a day or two a vote of money would be proposed. The mutineers were incensed, and an admiral repulsed their deputation. The men rushed to arms, overpowered their officers, and were proceeding to hang a lieutenant, when the Admiral assumed the whole blame, and the insurgents relented. Some of the sailors spoke openly of carrying one of the ships to France, but their delegates forbade a scheme so rash,

and the mutineers contented themselves with sending all their officers ashore. The squadron was now completely in their hands.

On May 5 Pitt submitted his estimate of expenses, and a debate arose which occupied several days. He demanded a silent vote. But Fox urged that in such case the House would resemble children "who shut their eyes and think nobody can see them." On the 8th Sheridan recalled the House to a broad sense of the real situation.

"Why was it," he asked, "that this vote was to be proposed when information had been received of a new disturbance? Why had not official promises been followed by instant performance? There had been a fortnight's delay. The seamen had been directed to weigh anchor and meet the enemy of the country. How could they do so till this crisis was adjusted? The first step ought to have been a parliamentary communication, when a unanimous vote would certainly have satisfied the men, while the representations that they had made would have met with consideration. In such a case the mutiny would have ceased. He rated their character too highly to think otherwise." The next day he spoke again. Things had been mismanaged: there had been contemptible incapacity. The minister waited for an estimate of expenses. "Did he really believe that the public were thus to be insulted?" Why had he not brought this estimate down earlier, at the moment of the King's proclamation? The Bank, the Emperor, were nothing to this emergency. Had not the sailors received a promise from the Admiralty, which the Government had now thought fit to neglect? If this went on, what would become of the orders to sail? His friend Whitbread had moved in the matter; he called on him to stay his hand. Every opportunity for preparation should be given. "Be the claims of the sailors what they might, what was now proposed to be granted to them was nothing more than justice." At the same time these demands had been pressed unfairly, and in a manner unworthy of "the brave, generous, and open character of British seamen." He did not doubt that some "foul interference" had perverted them, while means of the basest nature had been used to persuade them into the steps which they

had taken. The conduct of ministers was the cause, for the sailors doubted their promises. Had any measure been taken to avert future mischief? They were told that a sullen silence ought to be observed. "What inference would the sailors naturally draw? Why, that the Parliament had passed this measure unwillingly. . . . He hoped therefore that it would be expressed as the general sentiments of the House, that they did give and grant this as the real right of the British Navy. . . . It was a curious thing to see the minister whose negligence was responsible—to see him still holding in his own hand the helm of the vessel which his pilotage had steered on to the rocks—to see him tell the sailors, 'Hold your tongues, let not a word be spoken; I will bring you safe through all your dangers; and as a proof that I will do so, I am the person who brought you into them.'" This was no party question. Discipline was imperative, and he would propose the appointment of a joint Committee which should deliberate without delay.

The motion was rejected, and, pursuant to the King's advice, Lord Howe himself repaired to Portsmouth. "Black Dick" visited all the ships at Spithead and St. Helens. Authorised to promise some redress, insisting on penitent submission, he was able to restore the elements of order. The rebel squadron sailed for Brest, but a worse mutiny, headed by Richard Parker, immediately broke out in the Medway. He was appointed "Rear-Admiral." No man was allowed to leave his ship, and the usurper ordered the vessels to proceed to Sheerness and thence to the Nore. All this happened before May 19, on which day Sheridan delivered an effective speech in the House of Commons, after having himself issued a remonstrance to the rebels. His plan was to form a comprehensive commission, empowered to examine all grievances, and reject all demands found to be dangerous or impolitic. At Pitt's request, however, he postponed his scheme, and then, on the evening named, came down to the House with the mutineers' "appeal" in his hands, and patriotically receded from his original purpose. He was convinced, he said, from internal evidence, that

this document could not be the composition of the delegates. It belied the traditions and temper of the fleet. If ever man loved man, if ever one part of the people loved another, the nation loved the seamen. The House loved them, and in that respect were their representatives. In the "appeal" a foolish and virulent invective had been aimed against himself. For this he could not blame the poor tars, who had been hoodwinked and misled. "Sir," he concluded, "I cannot instance a greater proof of my endeavours to promote the advantage of the seamen than that in the year 1786, in the seventh session of the then Parliament, a gentleman did twice bring in a Bill before the House which I afterwards renewed for the general benefit of seamen; and, although the principles of such Bills were objected to, it did happen that they had for their object the redress of those grievances which have of late been the subject of complaint. Sir, I have ever been their friend, but never more so than at this period in warning them against those artifices which have been practised to seduce them. When people tell them that the navy can be managed without subordination, they may as well tell them that a ship can be managed without a rudder; they had better pull down the masts and the shrouds and lay them on the deck than listen to such representations. At the same time, Sir, it should be understood that there are no farther grievances, if any exist, which we will not redress." He would work side by side with the ministers in every effort to restore harmony, and therefore he would delay his motion, which was "of a consolatory nature," satisfied that he had now exploded the misrepresentations in this mutineers' "appeal."

Proclamations were published, and the Lords of the Admiralty resumed their vain methods of accommodation. Parker's insurrection was better led, more stubbornly planned, than its predecessor, and the fleet resembled a floating republic with a resolute rebel for president. To Lord Spencer's grave warnings the despot replied, "You may all be d——d," and Pitt and Dundas were forthwith hung in effigy at the yard-arm.[1]

[1] Cf. Fitzpatrick's "Secret Service under Pitt," p. 112.

Then Sheridan did more than speak. He acted. He called on Dundas and gave him wise counsel. The *Neptune* and other ships were armed, numerous gun-boats were fitted out, a mortar battery was erected on the Isle of Grain at a spot where the insurgents could be shelled, the shore was carefully guarded, and all the buoys and beacons that indicated the navigable passes of the Thames, were removed. Sir George Grey was sent down the coast; a price, set on Parker's head. These energetic precautions were largely due to Sheridan's foresight, and eventually the crisis passed over, and the ringleader was executed.

On June 2 Sheridan spoke again. He deprecated the conditions which had prevented his first scheme of a commission at once discriminating and conciliatory. But the persistence of the rebellion demanded an absolute surrender of party. Pitt must be supported, for "if there was a rot in the wooden walls of old England, her decay could not be very distant." Whether Britain succumbed to France or her own disunion was immaterial; the national commerce was the chief aim of French vengeance. At the same time he would not like to see our penal code largely increased. He pointed the moral. Such a system had created the miseries of Ireland and would equally injure England. Was not this mutiny itself a proof that repression could never check the elements of disloyalty? The ministers had established a system of barracks, in order, he supposed, to isolate the army from contagion; if the people could not be made dumb, the soldiers must be made deaf. But existing laws could well provide for present emergencies, and much as he differed in other matters from the administration, unanimity was now of prime importance, and he would support them to the full.[1]

Pitt lavished encomiums on Sheridan's attitude. He had shown that he could act and think in the spirit of a great Englishman. Henceforward, in the face of a common foe, he

[1] For the foregoing, cf. Adolphus's "History," Vol. V., pp. 561—588; Sheridan's Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 186—211; Parl. Deb. June 2, 1797; Rae, Vol. II., p. 198. Sheridan was called to order for his censure of the barrack system by Mr. William Baker. This session closed on July 20.

looked for freedom more and more in the national spirit, while Fox, though sometimes patriotic, tended more and more to decry his country's battle. Intellectually, Fox remained a disciple of Rousseau, and a citizen of Geneva. But Sheridan would not forget Great Britain, nor did he assume a catchpenny patriotism. He persisted in it ever afterwards, and during the next year he gave it an expression which again drew forth Pitt's warm approval. The times were critical. It was feared that France would invade England, and the King's Speech pressed both domestic and foreign dangers on public attention. Sheridan then stoutly supported the Government, though he still traversed Pitt's view of "traitorous correspondence," and loyally maintained his adherence to Fox. But he would not hail Bonaparte as an emancipator of peoples, or the Directory as republican Romans. "Do we not see," he exclaimed, "that they have planted the tree of liberty in the garden of monarchy, where it still continues to produce the same rare and luxurious fruit? . . . It is not glory they seek for, they are already gorged with it; it is not territory they grasp at, they are already encumbered with the extent they have acquired. What is then their object? They come for what they really want: they come for ships, for commerce, for credit and for capital. Yes, they come for the sinews and bones, for the marrow and for the very heart's blood, of Great Britain." It would be puerile to wait till the enemy had landed. All classes must unite in preparation, and two especially might contribute to defence, the one "composed of those sturdy hulking fellows whom we daily see behind coaches"; the other, "those young gentlemen of high rank who are daily mounted on horses of high blood." He was ashamed, he said, to breathe a word about himself, though public spirit was now unfortunately taxed with private motive. He should be "the meanest and basest of mankind" if he preferred "some party principle" to the complete protection of England. "Every measure," he was proud to own, "that invigorates the spirit of the people, and strengthens the Crown to resist the ambition of the enemy and to relieve us from our present perilous position," had his "cordial respect,"

and ought to have that of such as impugned his ability.[1] Not Fox himself could be more opposed to the policy of Pitt, but he would never sacrifice the commonwealth to faction. Napoleon had wholly transformed his view of the French Revolution. He had thought Britain aggressive and interfering, but now Britain herself lived on sufferance, and Sheridan would not clamour for peace when defence was imperative. He was a strange Whig, belonging neither to those who followed Burke into their Government haven, nor to such as maintained their consistency at the expense of their country.

[1] Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 240—254 (Speech of April 26, 1798).



RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

from an engraving,

after a portrait by Hickey.

## CHAPTER XI

### Surprises

### (1793—1801)

[Sheridan's Second Marriage and its Sequels — Polesden—Drury Lane Rebuilt—"Vortigern and Rowena" — "The Stranger" — "Pizarro"— Fox's Secession—Sheridan's Relations to Fox—Sir John Macpherson's Unpublished Letter to Sheridan— Irish Affairs — Sheridan at the O'Connor and Thanet Trials — His Attitude on the Union — Pitt's Resignation.]

> "Men start to find what changes on them wait,
> And self-surprise is named both whim and fate."
>
> Anon.

Sheridan would indeed have been surprised had he been told some years before his St. Cecilia's death that in less than the space of three years from that event he would be married again; that within one, Tickell would have committed suicide; that in three years too old Linley would have departed, and Drury Lane Theatre be rebuilt; that shortly afterwards he would be deluded into producing a spurious Shakespeare tragedy on its boards. Still more incredulous might he have been had someone prophesied that within five years Fox would have seceded from Parliament, and left his ragged regiment to their own devices; that, further, he himself in six years' time would figure as a witness for the rebel O'Connor, half urge him to escape, and be suspected of having ruined the cause of his acquaintance Lord Thanet at his trial for a plot to rescue Edward Fitzgerald's comrade. Nor, with his indolence, would he have been less amazed to have heard that in the next year he would see performed and published a version by himself of Kotzebue's melodrama, which would reap a harvest as golden as his most

original compositions. But the sentimentalist need never be surprised. His life is a cockle-shell on the tide of feeling, with the waves and winds of which it tosses.

Sheridan was over forty-three and his bride not yet turned twenty, when, on April 27, 1795, he wedded Esther Jane Ogle, the youngest daughter of Newton Ogle, Dean of Winchester, by a wife, who was daughter to a bishop of the same diocese, and once the King's preceptor.[1] The Ogles were of Northumbrian stock and hailed from Kirkley. Esther had three sisters, Anne, Kate and Susan, to whom (and to whose nephews[2]) Sheridan was uniformly kind and affectionate. It was a romantic match. Sheridan fell madly in love when he met her—so ran the rumour—at Devonshire House; while she, at first reported to have exclaimed, "Keep away, you terrible creature," ended by declaring, so testifies Thomas Grenville, that Sheridan was the "handsomest and honestest man in England."[3] The Ogles were then staying at Southampton, always a favourite resort of Sheridan's, and the newspapers of March and April teem with titbits about the courtship and the wedding, which took place in that city. It had been deferred so as to succeed the nuptials of the Prince of Wales with the luckless Caroline of Brunswick, who had rejected his proffered hand on their way from the ceremony; while on that night

[1] The Dean died in January, 1804, aged 78, at the Prebendal House of Durham. He was a brother of Sir Chaloner Ogle, and their sister, the Baroness de Stark, died in February of the following year; she is described as of "literary attainments." Grey's wife and Whitbread's were both cousins of the second Mrs. Sheridan. Cf. cuttings in Eg. MS. 2136, ff. 161d. and 162. Mrs. Sheridan's age is ascertained from her tomb in Old Windsor churchyard. That she was the youngest daughter appears from the obituary notice among the cuttings in Eg. MS. 1975, f. 186. Her mother, who became blind, and broke her leg in 1799, died at Bath, aged 86, in March, 1820; cf. cuttings in Eg. MS. 1975, ff. 185, 196d.

[2] Harry and Nathaniel. In Add. MS. 29764, f. 9, is an interesting letter from Nathaniel Ogle to Sheridan, sending a copy "of the vigorous verses written by the great Sir Walter Raleigh after his condemnation." These of course are "The Soul's Errand," beginning, "Go, soul, the body's guest."

[3] Cf. Moore's "Journal," Vol. IV., p. 134.



THE SECOND Mrs. TICKELL.

from a mezzotint,

after the portrait by G. Romney.

[*By kind permission of Messrs. Agnew.*]

this great gentleman tumbled drunk into the fire-grate.[1] On March 11, Mr. Sheridan's union with Miss Ogle "was expected in a few days"; on March 14, he had returned to town, and the marriage was to happen on the same day as the Prince's; on April 3, "the patience of the happy pair was nearly exhausted"; on April 30, Sheridan's delay was ascribed to management, and he was reported to have an opera and a comedy ready for the stage—our old friends "The Foresters" and "Affectation." The honeymoon was passed at the old house at Wanstead,[2] so lightly had the memories of his ordeal gone by, though Sheridan told tutor Smyth that "he had no other place to put her in." Nor should it be forgotten, when we bear "the man of feeling" in mind, that he was married only a fortnight after, and in the same month as, the anniversary of his first union. Of Sheridan's own mysterious movements during the preceding weeks, Smyth, then supervising Tom, has given us graphic glimpses: a letter bidding the son to meet him at Guildford at an inn, the name of which he of course forgot; Tom's excitement in the hopes of an heiress or even of a parliamentary career; his arrival at Guildford only to find no father and no money—nothing to look at but "the stable and street"; his rage when the oblivious Sheridan was seen whirling up to town in a lit coach with four horses; finally, a letter (franked by Sheridan) from the pupil to the tutor, in which he deplored that it was his father's marriage, not his own, that lay at the root of all these escapades. "My father," he wrote, "talked to me two hours last night, and made out to me that it was the most sensible thing that he could do. Was not this very clever of him? . . . You should have been tutor to him, you see. I am incomparably the most rational of the two." Then followed Sheridan's honeymoon-letter to Tom with his quip of "Your aged mother sends her blessing," and his patient persuasion of Smyth to be the boy's mentor at

[1] Cf. the authentic accounts in a well-informed and most interesting book of anonymous authorship, "Memoirs of the Times of George IV." (Colburn, 1838; edited by Galt).

[2] Cf. newspaper cuttings in Eg. MS. 1975.

Cambridge.[1] It was the case of the conspirators in "The Critic" over again:—

> "Assist us to accomplish all our ends,
> And sanctify whatever means we use
> To gain them."

Sheridan never ceased to be "Pierrot," but surely he had passed the age for such excursions. He joked over these sentimental journeys, and when Pitt complained of his long absence from the national council, he retorted by saying that it was due to a cause which would hardly enlist that cold-blooded minister's sympathy.

It was an unwise marriage. Good though she was and handsome, she could not have been his helpmate, even if he had been only half as erratic and only half as impossible to live with. She was capricious, and Sheridan over-indulged her whims. She was desperately fashionable, and extravagant in proportion, and she must have been pleased to be welcomed by Lady Bessborough, and to receive the Duchess of Devonshire's "everlasting love."[2] She sang well and danced well,[3] but in things

[1] "Memoirs," pp. 45—64.

[2] Sheridan in his letters to her, especially the long ones of apology and explanation, makes it quite clear how willing he had been to stint himself for her benefit. In one he protests his "indifference to what the world calls comforts, much more its luxuries," and he shows how by a rearrangement of his affairs, she could keep her carriage, for which he allotted two hundred and fifty pounds. In another (cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 209) he writes, "The delight of my life is to see you cheerful and without care; but . . . we must be as careful as ants. I employed Tom's man to collect for me the bills at Richmond. The amount is frightful, more than four times what I expected, for since the short time I had it, I had twice cleared them off." This must have been in 1807, when Richmond figures as the address on several of his letters. In 1811 Miss Berry (as Rae points out, *ibid.*) notices her recklessness, a conversation one day on retrenchment, the next at Mrs. Villiers's, "waltzing away there, the gayest among the gay." Cf. Miss Berry's "Journals and Corr.," Vol. II., pp. 483, 484.

[3] Sheridan in one of his letters mentions a conversation with the King about waltzing, and the royal remark that fortunately Charlotte's corns prevented it. Sheridan was as averse to that dance as Byron. Rae

intellectual she seems to have taken scanty interest. Though he writes to her, with enthusiasm, of "Waverley" and "Peter Plymley's" letters, and insists how much she could help him in the construction of a play, it is touching to read her confession of ignorance towards the close.[1] To politics she was indifferent, and Sheridan himself once assured her, "God made the country—but the House of Commons—Oh!"[2] She hunted for celebrities, and lived to bore Lord Byron. She liked to feel that she had caught an illustrious man. Yet she was brave and loyal, bearing much that would have broken a stouter heart with silent dignity. And at the end, after half-separations and many carking troubles, her devotion knew no bounds. Wasted for five years, by a fatal illness, she thought only of her "dear" Sheridan; "honour, glory and truth for Sheridan" was her demand after his death. Writing to Lord Holland in 1812, "My whole heart and soul," she exclaimed, "is with Sheridan."[3]

Sheridan himself never fell out of love with his "Hecca," as he named her. "My soul's beloved," My only delight in life," "My own Gypsey," "My own dear bit of brown Holland," "prettiest of all my eyes ever thought pretty, dearest of all that

(Vol. II., p. 210) quotes the following by Sheridan from Thomas Grenville's Album at Stowe:—

"The Waltz: an Apostrophic Hymn.

"While arts improve in this aspiring age,
Peers mount the coach-box, horses mount the stage
And waltzing females with unblushing face
Disdain to dance but in a man's embrace,
While arts improve and modesty is dead,
Sound sense and taste are, like our bullion, fled."

[1] "I am not handsome, I am full of faults and very ignorant. I have a tolerable heart, and not a little mind, and I adore merit in others, and that is all I can say for myself." Mrs. Sheridan to Mrs. LeFanu, October 24, 1816, cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 358. The "Plymley Letters" (on Catholic emancipation) were of course by Sydney Smith, and came out in 1806.

[2] "But Heccate does not care for politics, and I must go and attend a meeting at Lord Fitzwilliam's, so Heaven bless thy heart." Sheridan to his wife, February 9, 1801 (Sheridan MSS.).

[3] Holland House MSS.

ever was dear to my heart," are among his caresses. He tells her that her "white wings" will brush away his cares. He dotes uxoriously on every feature,—her "emerald" eyes or "green beads," which he "will kiss on Saturday"; her "low forehead, round plump elbows and flowing tresses." "Bless your eyelids," he writes; "my beloved, bless you ever and ever and all over," "Bless thy heart, my only real pleasure on earth," "Bless your days and nights."[1] Sorry as the life was that he led her, he is constantly to be found caring for her health, scheming for her pleasures, and fretting over her safety. Later on, when she discussed his affairs with Whitbread, Grey, and others, he tells her how hurt he is by her want of respect. But the mere thought of estrangement distracts him. "At no time," he wrote in 1799, "has your kindness been more necessary to me. Do not fail me, my dearest." If he did not hear from her regularly, he became frantic: "Gracious God," he exclaimed, "not a single line. If a voice from heaven had told me that any human being should have treated me thus, I should not have believed it. No matter." But, as she owned, her difficulty in writing sprang from the simple fact that she had nothing to say. "Pray, my dear S., write, for I like of all things to hear from you, and when you write, I feel as if I had something to say"; to which he replied, "When your dear letter this morning began 'My dear S.' as formerly, I felt my gloom-sprite more cleared away than by any other circumstance." Throughout his communications not one cross word ever escapes him; indeed, he expressly says, "Nothing shall ever induce me to write an unkind or even an expostulatory expression towards you." All these excerpts are from late letters, but there is one which from internal evidence must have been written a year or so after their marriage. It refers to Wilmot, member for Coventry, to whom Sheridan had evidently taken a dislike; while we know from another letter that he considered Mrs. Wilmot, Hecca's relation, as her very counterpart:—

"What a sweet evening! O Sheridan, if you were but here,

[1] Sheridan MSS., cited with others by Rae, Vol. II., p. 211.



The Second Mrs. SHERIDAN

(Hester Ogle : "Hecca").

from an old engraving

after the portrait by Hoppner.

Hecca would be quite happy. I give you leave to *hate* Wilmot as much as you like. I stood up for him from gratitude, but as I think my gratitude misplaced, I stand up no longer. He is my acquaintance but not my friend, and I don't care one pin what he thinks. When I think of all his professions, I confess it does divert me. I could make him appear rather in a ridiculous light, but I won't. *Sheridan, how much better you are than anything on earth, and how well I love you. I will hate everything you hate, and love everything you love, so God bless you.*" [1]

The birth of a son on January 14, 1796, was a source of great rejoicing. He was christened Charles Brinsley,—at "the font of Opposition," laughed the newspapers, for Grey and Fox were his godfathers, and Dr. Parr himself officiated.[2] Sheridan was devoted to the child, whom he nicknamed "Robin," and Hoppner painted him pickaback with his mother.[3] Over his education he perpetually brooded. He was sent to Winchester and Cambridge; Bloomfield was his private tutor at home. "Application, application, application," insisted the father anent his training; but Rochefoucauld has well said that "old age, when it can no longer set a bad example, gives good advice." None the less, at his worst hour he suffered hardships to provide for the son's education and the mother's comfort,[4] while he told her that, to ensure her happiness, he would gladly with one hand cut off the other. Charles inherited the gift of verse, and Tom, as much devoted to his new brother as to his sympathetic "mater," penned long and critical letters on his early efforts.

[1] Sheridan MSS.

[2] Cf. the cuttings Eg. MS. 1975, f. 150d.

[3] Sheridan, referring to this portrait in a letter to Anne Ogle, says, "I have made Hoppner alter what you mentioned in the picture, and he was quite obliged to me for the remark and saw the fault directly. It is really the loveliest thing that ever was seen—immensely admired." About Charles, Sheridan speaks of their home as "Robin's nest." From the mention in a letter of a "babe" as well as Robin, there would almost seem to have been another child.

[4] Sheridan MSS. Sheridan to his second wife (whom there he addresses as "Hester"). "RICHMOND, April 20, 1810."

During many vicissitudes Charles Sheridan remained a link of attachment between his parents.

Yet the day came, some eight years later, when for a time they were estranged. His nomad habits; her treatment of the theatre as a Fortunatus's purse; above all, the bouts in which he drowned his distresses, though twice he gave up liquor and worked night and day to retrieve their embarrassments; [1] her quick temper, which, however, never exhausted his courteous patience—all these causes of friction helped to set up a temporary barrier. She had much to bear. Allowing for every exaggeration,[2] the subjoined letter from Lady Bessborough to Lord Holland in 1804, tells a melancholy tale, and proves that the false stimulus which he craved was no mere fiction of his enemies:—

"Poor Richardson is dead. Sheridan (if Richardson's death does not frighten him) will do the same, for he is never sober for a moment; and his affairs, worse than ever. *Pour comble*, he has quarrelled with Mrs. S. A sort of separation took place, but I believe it is partly made up again—at least I believe they live in the same house again, but not very good friends. I am very sorry for it, for she was the only chance there was of stopping his drinking."[3] Sheridan closed a brilliant letter to the same lady dashed off in the House during a debate, "I am half drunk and can write no more—perhaps had better not have written half so much." His irregularities led him to lean on others, and after Tickell's death in 1793, Richardson became

[1] Even at other times in his letters to his second wife he speaks of only taking a "pint of wine," and when he stayed at Woburn in 1803, he says, "Wine in all moderation." Towards the end, however, he relapsed, and Lady Holland declares that during his periodical stays at Holland House he took up to bed what was alleged to be a book, but was really a bottle of brandy; but then Lady Holland was always acid (especially in her journal), and Sheridan in one of his letters to Hecca tells her that Lady Bessborough remarked that Lady Holland had at length been "amiable."

[2] Creevey records that when Lady B., about this time when Fox was wroth with Sheridan, sent a message to him to give up drink and tell the truth, Sheridan answered that she was not a good example of the latter virtue.

[3] Holland House MSS.

more than ever his second self, his associate in Parliament and the theatre, his factotum at home.

To his first wife Sheridan had been "Sheri," to his second he was plain "Dan," "poor Dan," who was "all alone *le*melancholy as a tomb," or as "a yew tree in a churchyard,"[1] and the transference from the more romantic to the prosier appellative is not without significance. There are ninety-six of his letters to the second Mrs. Sheridan. Their allusions political and social have interest, but intrinsically they lack salt, and at times they are even dull. Hecca's inspiration was not that of St. Cecilia.

At the outset was mentioned the queer settlement that Sheridan himself made on his marriage, restraining him from touching the capital till a large sum had accumulated. It further empowered his trustees (as had been the case when he married Miss Linley) to vary the investments. In 1796 a tempting property—Admiral Geary's estate of Polesden in Surrey—came into the market. It amounted to three hundred and forty-one acres, and Sheridan's trustees, Grey and Whitbread, his wife's connections, sank a substantial part of the settlement money in it, and were repaid by Sheridan for so doing:[2] he pulled down the old house, built a new homestead,

[1] Cf. his letters to her "Monday night" (? 1797), "Hertford Street, Monday night" (? 1799). Sheridan MSS.

[2] Among the Sheridan MSS. is the following undated memorandum:—

"£1,500 paid by Mr. Adam to Trustees for marrage settlement to compleat the £4,000 3% stipulated. I take the interest on the £8,000 lent on Polesden, only as if it remained in the stock, though I have added £6,000 more in purchase of Polesden [and] take no advantage for other survey made of timber, etc., though very advantageous, [and] paid for by me as they were mortgaged, except Marshall's Farm. . . ."

Writing to his wife years later from Richmond, on April 20, 1810, he says of Polesden, ". . . Were I to calculate the average of my annual loss since Edwards [his old man-servant] has had the management of it at £400 I should be very much under the fact, and though I have made good purchases which have greatly increased the value of the estate, as Charles, I trust, will one day experience, yet through the blunder or worse of Dunn, your trustee's solicitor, these efforts on my part have occasioned in their progress a loss to me of certainly not less than seven or eight thousand

and gradually acquired much surrounding land. It was said afterwards—and the report has been pressed against him—that Admiral Geary bitterly complained of delay in payment, and of Sheridan's evasions. But the purchase, though instigated by Sheridan and extended afterwards, was primarily a trust-purchase, and almost immediately it was even bruited that the estate had been redisposed of at a thousand pounds profit. Sheridan hoped to be fortunate as a farmer, but he succeeded in agriculture no better than Burke, though as the years passed he often fancied that what he let others mismanage would turn to gold; and with him Eldorado was always in sight. He liked to play the squire as much as Sir Walter Scott liked to play the laird. He bought bargains for his dairy. He took a personal interest in his tenants, visiting, assisting, and sympathising with them. His harvest-homes were chronicled, and his letters display keen anxiety about rainy Septembers.[1] With the peasantry he was most popular, and he fought for their rights of common as if he had been fighting against Warren Hastings.[2] It cannot be too often emphasised that his whole outlook was the people's.

Mrs. Sheridan's dowry was only £8,000, but Sheridan, to the general surprise, managed to add £12,000, as was noted in our prologue. Despite Polesden, which eventually became valuable, the untouched accumulations under a clause in the contract from which even his father-in-law in vain tried to dissuade him, amounted to £40,000, of which Mrs. Sheridan stood possessed when she died.[3] Polesden then passed to their

pounds." Sheridan MSS. In 1810 Sheridan tells his wife that Polesden, then "directed" by a Mr. Metcalfe, yielded him a thousand a year.

[1] "Rain . . . which made my bones ache for my harvest. O ye gods that my ricks had been thatched even with 'fern and green boughs.'" Sheridan MSS., Sheridan to his second wife, September 5, 1804 (cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 205).

[2] "There is a meeting on the business of enclosing all the Commons, Ransmore, Bookham, etc., and if I am not on the spot, they . . . will perhaps ruin the beauty of Polesden. . . . But I will see real justice done to the cottagers and the poorest claimants." Sheridan MSS., November 15, 1804 (cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 205).

[3] For the amount of the settlement which was in the three per cents., cf.

son and only child, whose philhellenic tastes found expression both in travels and verses before, on November 29, 1843, he too passed away.

But we must turn aside to things theatrical. In 1791 it became plain that the old theatre was no longer safe or adequate, and it was resolved to rebuild and reorganise it. A *jeu d'esprit* by Sheridan remains on the life and death of the "venerable Madam Drury," while masses of complex documents exist as to the attendant projects and agreements. Amid all their verbiage several clear facts emerge. The new house was to be surrounded by shops and taverns capable of producing a good rental, but this important part of the scheme never matured. The rates of admission were to be reduced, while the subscribers for new capital were to have free passes and other privileges. From one memorandum it appears that the price to be paid for the theatre was £130,000, subject to an annuity of £3,500 to the old shareholders and a ground rent of £500. Even as matters then stood Sheridan's Drury Lane income (however forestalled) amounted to over £5,000, and apart from his "renter" shares, the capital value of his own boxes reached the sum of over £60,000. But the estimates made for the new structure fell below the mark by some £70,000,[1]

the cuttings in Eg. MS. 1975, f. 154 (July 28, 1796). When Mrs. Sheridan died at the close of October, 1817, the following appeared in a newspaper: "Mrs. Sheridan left at least £40,000. Her family made a very secure bargain with Mr. S. before she was allowed to give him her hand. To the £8,000 which constituted her fortune, he was required to add £12,000, and it was stipulated he should not touch the interest till the £20,000 were converted by it to £40,000." This had been effected at the time of her death; cf. *ibid.*, f. 185d., which corroborates Sheridan's own statement to his wife, cited in full *ante* in Vol. I., p. 44. There was endless gossip as to how Sheridan could have raised the £12,000 which the family demanded. It was insinuated that he had impoverished the Linleys by alienating some of their interest in the theatre. But he was then their trustee, and their Bath property which he administered certainly brought them in a good revenue. It may be conjectured that he mortgaged or granted annuities on some of his own renter shares or private boxes—a pet device of his in emergencies. Certain of these boxes alone were valued at no less than £300 a year.

[1] Including law expenses. Cf. several documents in the Sheridan MSS.

and this deficit sorely involved Sheridan's future. In 1794, and again in 1796, he assigned all his theatrical property to trustees, of whom Adam, one of the managers at the Hastings trial and a friend of the Prince, was chief: the Prince himself took a warm interest in the affair. The second compact, under which Sheridan assigned "fifty-seven new Proprietors' shares," was necessitated by the great excess of building costs over the original estimates as well as by "unforeseen law expenses"; while it was further aggravated by the intervention of the bankers Hammersley. Nor, if his statements are correct, was Sheridan's liability limited; he complained in 1797 that the balance due to him from the theatre was actually charged to his own account, while as the last straw, after a few years, Drury Lane had again to face a huge debt to its new promoters. Even the windfall of Betty, the boy prodigy, who for a short spell proved a mine of wealth, could not retrieve the position, and in 1802 a Chancery suit was filed against Sheridan, which he eloquently defended in person. He had hoped that Kemble would purchase his moiety in 1800, and in October, 1806, he resigned the direction in favour of his son;[1] yet he voluntarily and needlessly assumed his large proportion of this deficit, and finally paid another gratuitous £5,000 or £6,000 to the new "renters," solely to satisfy his sense of honour, as he assured his wife in a long letter of retrospect and apology.[2] In the end he retained a conditional interest, and received a proportion of salary which even in 1810 amounted to some £1,400.

The new theatre opened on March 12, 1794, but meanwhile

[1] Cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 164d.

[2] "RICHMOND, April 20, 1810." Cf. the facts already adduced in the "Overture" to Vol. I., *ante*, p. 45. There is also a memorandum among his papers dated February 16, 1802, to the effect that he did not mean the settlement then laid before the Chancellor to cause the invalidation or withdrawal of any securities "which can be fairly shown to have been given by him to Messrs. Hammersley & Co. for any debt not paid off." It further appears that he held the bills of one Grubb (a regular name in the Drury Lane imbroglios), and that the theatre had left these unnegotiated. For Tom's part in the new arrangements, cf. *post*, p. 303, *n.* 2.

fresh arrangements had been made with the King's Opera House in the Haymarket, where the Drury Lane actors temporarily performed, and with the Pantheon, whose competition during this interval would have been formidable. These compacts entailed fresh worries and misunderstandings.[1] Sheridan, though still retaining valuable assets, had lost his way in a maze of mortgages that form a veritable Chinese puzzle. As soon as one rearrangement is disposed of, another with its readjusted "securities" crops up—encumbrance within encumbrance—till the eyes are dazed and the mind reels. He counted the sum of his losses by the long course of theatrical entanglements at no less than £60,000 and the huge expenses, which he shared, as amounting to £27,000.[2] And, in addition, he told his Hecca that the lawyers' delays in completing the preliminaries to a theatre, much too large when finished, had lost him £30,000[3] more. What with scheme piled on scheme, attorney and banker outvying banker and attorney, it was hard for him or for any one else to realise either property or position. Shrewd as Sheridan was with figures, he had raised the wind so often that he drifted at random, though henceforward he contracted very few fresh obligations. Nothing, however, could daunt his hopes. As projects multiplied, paper after paper remains inscribed with triumphant proofs, not only of perfect solvency, but of certain profit.

In the spring of 1796 Sheridan was victimised by William Ireland, a lad of nineteen, who, ill-emulating Chatterton, had

[1] There are drafts of the agreement with the Haymarket Theatre both in the Sheridan MSS. and in Eg. MS. 2134, f. 75. The Drury Lane Direction promised its best efforts to re-establish the Italian operas there. There is a long memorial too about the Pantheon misfeasances to Lord Salisbury, the Lord Chamberlain, and some rough notes on this matter, among which Sheridan writes, "I had rather have given them the theatre"; much fuss and threats of litigation arose about "the dormant patent."

[2] The sum is named in the memorial just mentioned of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden Proprietors to Lord Salisbury about the Pantheon: "We actually paid Messrs. Wallis & Troward above £27,000 for law expenses."

[3] When Wallis died, Sheridan wrote to his second wife that out of his "ill-gotten gains" he owed him (Sheridan) thousands.

palmed off a new Shakespearean manuscript, not only on the dramatist and John Kemble, but on tried experts like Porson and Malone. The play was entitled "Vortigern and Rowena," and its production proved the sensation of literary circles; Boswell kissed the sacred pages, and declared that he could now die happy.[1] On the night of its one performance—April 2 (and perhaps the preceding day would have been a more suitable date)—all the world thronged Drury Lane to hear Kemble and Mrs. Jordan in this resurrectional masterpiece. Pitt's friend, Sir James Burges, composed its prologue, and the mincing Merry, an epilogue, which was fated never to be spoken. In the fifth act, where a line "And when this solemn mockery is o'er" had already preluded disaster, another which Kemble delivered, "Death with his icy hand now drags me down," gave the forgery its quietus. A deluge of howls swamped an imposture which the unerring instinct of a large audience had at once detected.

> "No common cause your verdict now demands,
> Before the court immortal Shakespeare stands,"

formed a distich of the prologue. The jury found Shakespeare "not guilty," and the brazen Ireland was hooted out of court.[2] It was said that Sheridan treated this *fiasco* with indifference, but this can scarcely have been the case, since he complains in his papers that the whole loss—two hundred and fifty pounds—was debited to himself.

Sheridan cast about for new sources of sensation. German windiness and Kotzebue's full-blooded sentiment were fast supplanting the calmer influence of French comedy; Benjamin Thompson had translated "The Stranger." This Sheridan altered—how considerably may be seen from an existing facsimile of the corrected text—and in 1798 Mrs. Siddons achieved a great success as Mrs. Haller, its heroine. Sheridan wrote a song for it, "I have a silent sorrow here," the song transferring some lines from an earlier lyric of his own. Georgiana of

[1] Cf. Rae, Vol. II., p. 178.

[2] Cf. the "Octogenarian" who was present and Rae's excellent summary in Vol. II., pp. 179, 180.

Devonshire set it to the music with which it was published,[1] and green-room gossips rumoured that during rehearsal Sheridan pointed to his pocket, and was heard to mutter, "I have a silent *bottle* here." The stanza runs as follows:—

"I have a silent sorrow here,
A grief I'll ne'er impart.
It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
But it consumes my heart.
This cherished woe, this loved despair,
My lot for ever be,
So, my soul's lord, the pangs I bear
Be never known by thee."

He had been solicitous for fresh dramas,[2] but cheered by the success of this new departure, he set about another paraphrase in the same direction. Kotzebue's "The Spaniards in Peru; or, the Death of Rolla," offered a great spectacular and patriotic melodrama at the supreme hour of the battle of the Nile. It had been ill-translated both by Thompson and by Anne Plumptre, but Sheridan adopted neither of these versions. He employed a Miss Phillips to render the play,[3] which he not only changed and transposed but partially re-wrote. The climax differs wholly from that of the original; new passages and songs were introduced, all the declamatory fervour of his floweriest speeches found repetition, and "Pizarro: a Tragedy" was produced on May 24, 1799, with a prologue apologising for delay, and including a passage from his earlier one to Lady Craven's "Miniature Picture." The future Lord Melbourne evolved an epilogue, which treated of "A monarch's danger and a nation's fate." Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, and Mrs. Jordan, as Pizarro, Elvira, and Cora, were well fitted, and rapturously applauded.[4] Their heroic tirades hit off the intense patriotism of

[1] "The Favourate Song by Mr. Bland in 'The Stranger.' The Words by R. B. Sheridan, Esqre., the Air by Her Grace the Dutchess of Devonshire, printed by Longmans Clementi & Co., No. 96 Cheapside, Price 2s. 6d."

[2] Cf. the agreement with F. Reynolds in Add. MS. 27925, f. 14 (January, 1797).

[3] Cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 130.

[4] Sheridan's letters mention rehearsals and appointments both with regard to "The Stranger" and to "Pizarro." He hurried off to the country to catch Mrs. Siddons. Sheridan used one of the pieces of declamation for an "Address to the Surrey Volunteers"; cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 81.

a year when peace overtures had failed, and Nelson was in the glorious ascendant. Over the pageants Sheridan bestowed infinite pains. The Temple of the Sun with its procession of priestesses, the Spanish and Peruvian warriors, the picturesque pathos, too, of the female characters, the child borne aloft by Rolla, his funeral dirge—all these excited a *furore* belonging to their moment. The piece ran for thirty nights, and Sheridan received at least one thousand pounds.[1] It was at once published, and satirised in a skit entitled, "The Adventures of Pizarro," where "Pizarro" meant Sheridan. The play was the talk of the day; the same year it was printed in Philadelphia,[2] and in the evolution of modern melodrama it long lingered on the stage. Pendennis, it will be remembered, used to admire the Fotheringay when she presented its stale splendours at Chatteris. Sheridan enhanced the opportunity by a dedication to his youthful wife:—

"To *Her* whose approbation of this Drama, and whose peculiar delight in the applause it has received from the public, has been to *me* the highest gratification its success has produced, I dedicate this play."

The new motive given to Elvira in the second scene of the third act is Sheridan's own, so is Alonzo's declamation:—

"No! Deserter I am none! I was not born among robbers, pirates, murderers! When those legions lured by the abhorred lust of gold, and by thy foul ambition urged, forgot the honour of Catalans and forsook the duties of humanity, they deserted me. I have not warred against my native land, but against those who have usurped its power. The banners of my country when first I followed arms beneath them, were Justice, Faith, and Mercy. If these are beaten down and trampled under foot—I have no country, nor exists the power entitled to reproach me with revolt."

[1] Cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 160.

[2] "Pizarro, a Tragedy in Five Acts as performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, taken from the German Drama of Kotzebue, and adapted to the English stage by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Philadelphia, printed for H. & P. Rice, 16 South Second Street." "Genuine edition." The author has a copy of this rare imprint.

Here we catch Sheridan's voice against Napoleon.

His manuscript is preserved among the papers at Frampton Court; part of it is in his wife's handwriting. It contains an alternative song for that which is printed in the fifth act, the "Yes, yes, be merciless, thou tempest dire." This discarded lyric appears in a sort of blank verse intended to be transformed to rhyme:—

> "On a sad bed of leaves and moss my child is laid,
> Yet better bed than this chilled bosom, for
> Thou sleep'st, my babe, nor heed'st the tempest wild.
> This bosom is no couch for Peace or thee.
> Alas, alas! my babe, if thou wouldst rise,
> Seek any cradle but thy mother's breast."

In his paraphrase of "Pizarro" Sheridan gave full rein to that sentimental tempest which his own taste and the temper of an earlier time restrained in his comedies. But the fault of such melodrama is that sentimentality does not suit tempest; it is only fit for showers, and a "Pierrot"-epic, so to speak, is impracticable. Nevertheless, though the romantic outbursts of Bulwer Lytton and of Disraeli do not touch moderns as they used to do, sentiment lies at the root of English humour, chastened in Thackeray, who mocked it, exuberant in Dickens, who revelled in that element. On the stage, however, tragic sentimentality must fail, for there humour cannot accompany it, and in "Pizarro," as in Lytton's "Lady of Lyons," it is the lack of such an alliance that ruins vitality and causes one generation to sneer at what the other applauded. The bombast that Sheridan travesties in "The Critic" is only a stiffer and more cramped edition of what posterity calls fustian in "Pizarro." Kotzebue was the grandfather of that Adelphi melodrama, which Sheridan first naturalised in England.

But we must revert to politics, and to the moment—equally melodramatic—of Fox's secession. In 1795 he had gone so far in his hankerings after office as to treat even with Lansdowne.[1]

[1] Cf. Fox's Corr., Vol. III., p. 112. Fox loved coalitions, and declared that they were the best form of government.

He had failed twice and was to fail thrice again in coming to any solid understanding with Pitt. His popularity had waned, his ranks were dispersed, and the giant, metamorphosed into a dwarf, grew sulky and retired from the fray. All the petulance of his hesitation and all his half-jealousy of those whom he professed to leave free, are reflected in the frank pages of his correspondence. He longed yet loathed to unite with Pitt. In 1797, he would and he would not. Circumstances prompted his withdrawal from a scene where he was no longer "useful"; yet not for worlds would he fetter his friends. Grey remained as his vicegerent, Sheridan would not be shackled, Tierney tacked himself on to Grey. There were the wonted tiffs and misunderstandings, and the Hollands waxed furious when Sheridan blabbed of Tierney's stratagems with Grey. Their fury was quite needless. If the Foxites had been left to their own devices, the fault lay in the moody leader who wanted to have the cake that he would not eat, and to drag his followers off to his own isolation. Never was he less dignified, and the absurdity of his attitude culminated in 1798—after Lord Malmesbury had bungled the Lille peace, and Pitt's resignation seemed imminent. Fox renewed his coy approaches to the Premier, whose effigy had been burned by an indignant mob. Yet at that juncture Sheridan expressed himself in a letter to his Hecca, as positively dreading a return to power. He had never tampered with the great minister whose unbending bulk was his invariable target, but Fox edged in and out, only to find that Pitt disdained to admit him on equal terms. Then he hurried up from the sweet solitude of St. Anne's to worst his mortal enemy at one fell blow; he returned worsted himself, and was eventually forced to cabal with his ancient foes, the Grenvilles. Fox persisted in his demands for peace even after Napoleon had transformed the whole scene of action. In 1799 perhaps he was right, for the offer of peace which Napoleon then mooted in his dramatic letter to the King of England afforded some chance of security, and in any case it would have yielded a truce far more beneficial than the paltry Peace of Amiens. Yet when that treaty was patched up, Fox

denounced it, simply because Addington had made it. Sheridan, on the other hand, never favoured half-measures with the genius who terrorised the world, and Fox damned him accordingly.

But while Holland House looked sourly on Sheridan's lapses, he seems to have pursued a course which they themselves would have praised. It has escaped notice that, all this time, Sheridan wished to persuade Fox into return. Among the Sheridan documents is a very long letter of June, 1798, from Sir John Macpherson, Indian worthy and Prince's friend, on the sequels of the French Revolution; and his remarks chime with the change that had overtaken Sheridan's outlook. The question, he wrote, was no longer one of monarchical but one of anarchical prerogative: the "sovereign animal" had been "let loose in France." Had the French been content with achieving freedom, none could have complained, but, under the Directory, "assignats, not liberty," were conceded. The war, therefore, must now be waged, not to re-seat the Bourbons but to re-establish freedom. Pitt had contrived to make the Opposition seem the advocates of democratic despotism, and with this brush their leader was tarred! Sheridan was urged to turn Fox into a true patriot, and so to terminate the false situation. Fox, as a true Whig, Macpherson pointed out, should detest the present rulers of France as much as his ancestors had execrated Louis XIV. "I hope it is true," he writes, "*that you have induced Mr. Fox to appear among us before our summer dissolution.* It is a real misfortune to the world that he does not avail himself of a mind to do the direct good within his sphere. Were he a traveller, or a spectator of the scene like me, he could easily see the arts on the one side of others, and the inattentions on his own side, by which the *Opposition* has been made to shift sides to the *Administration* in the popular estimate of their political chances. To do good, he must regain his place. *You have opened the way for him.* I give you joy of French abuse. Will he not recollect that it is not of the stretches of the prerogative of Hampden's day, nor of the corruptions or Excise of a Walpole, that the proprietor-people of this country are now afraid? No, it is . . . the spoliation

of the Directory that they dread. Administrations have had the address to declare themselves the opposition to the Tyrant, and, in imputations of a disposition to favour him on the part of their opponents, they have reversed the former state of things, and the Opposition has become unpopular." He proceeded to propound a remedy not much to Sheridan's taste, a sheer coalition between Pitt and Fox.[1] Yet at the start of this very year Sheridan had attended Fox's birthday banquet at the "Crown and Anchor," where the Duke of Norfolk proposed his toast of "our sovereign's health—the Majesty of the People," for which he was drummed out of his regiment and dismissed from his lord-lieutenancy. Nor was it long before Fox, who really disapproved, rashly followed suit and was promptly struck off the Privy Council.[2]

Macpherson's letter concerned Ireland also, and 1798 was one of Ireland's worst-omened years, for the heroic Lord Edward Fitzgerald, despairing of constitutional methods, had headed a conspiracy, been betrayed, wounded and done to death. Lord Clare led the forces of repression, and Sheridan had raised a vehement voice against his conduct. "You have *begum-ed* the Chancellor-governor of Ireland," Sir John concludes; "I heard your speech. If it is printed and published like his own, he must end in impeachment. I conjure you to print it for the sake of a million of people. . . ."

The speech which Sir John lauded was one of June 18, on the state of Ireland. Sheridan reminded the House that Ireland had been loyal when treated with sympathy, and that Burke himself, believing in Parliament, had repudiated the roughness of unreason. He reprobated the force misused, the artifice which had played on "religious distinctions"; the rejection too of his own measure to relieve Roman Catholic soldiers from unjust disabilities. "To keep Ireland," he urged,

[1] Sir John Macpherson to R. B. Sheridan, "BROMPTON, 21 June, 1798."

[2] It was on May 25, 1798, that the King drew his pen across Fox's name; cf. "The Annual Register," 1798, "Chronicle," p. 41. Pitt from policy was much disinclined to martyrise him; cf. his letter to Lord Grenville of May 5, 1798, in Hist. MS. Comm., Dropmore Papers, Vol. IV., p. 187.

"against the will of the people is a vain expectation. With eighty thousand troops armed and disciplined against an unarmed and undisciplined multitude, is it not clear that the contest lies between the Government and the people? Without reversing the system, therefore, Ireland, as the phrase is, cannot be 'saved.' The struggle is one not of local discontent and partial disaffection, but it is a contest between the people and Government. In such a state of things, without entering into a particular inquiry, the fair presumption is that the Government is to blame."[1] Wise and understanding words these, nor wholly inapplicable at any time. But the ways of bureaucrats are seldom the ways of wisdom. Among his notes some exist for a fine speech in 1807 on Ireland. "Never trust any Government," he writes, "with the reform of any abuse. . . . One half of the real work of the State is done for half-price." And again, in a fresh note for a different speech stands a principle which truly animated him in Parliament:—"I will guard the poor man. The care of mitres and of coronets I will leave to the nation."

The rigours of government bred and fomented treason. Before the tragedy of Fitzgerald's end, his bosom friend Arthur O'Connor, with a conspiring priest named O'Coigley (or Quigley), had landed in England to concert fresh measures with France for the United Irishmen. From February to May they went unmolested but observed in London. But a traitor named Turner supplied Pitt with information, and Arthur O'Connor, his brother Roger, and the priest, who made no secret of his errand, were arrested on the point of embarking at Margate. They were conveyed to Maidstone. O'Connor's brother and the priest were treated with cruel severity, but Arthur O'Connor was considered more as a constitutional rebel, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald wrote to Fox that "he had nothing odd about him but twelve hundred guineas." The trial was fixed for the twenty-first of May. Fox, Sheridan, Grattan, Thanet, the Duke of Norfolk, with other Whig leaders,

[1] Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 261—270.

repaired to the assizes, and Sheridan himself gave an account of the trial in two letters dispatched to his wife. Buller was the judge. The "fray" mentioned in one of them greatly concerned Sheridan, for O'Connor, at first acquitted, was bidden to run for his life, only to be re-arrested on a new charge inside the Court. He had no wish to fly, but Lord Thanet and Mr. Fergusson (the Judge-Advocate-General), who were implicated in the *fracas*, apparently plotted to contrive an escape. At Holland House it was whispered (nor was the whisper amiss) that this message had been managed by Sheridan, himself a witness in O'Connor's favour. It urged him to jump over the bar, and make off, while his friends created a diversion. Not a word of this, however, transpires in his own story, but it will be found that next year, when he gave evidence at the further trial of Lord Thanet and Fergusson, for attempting O'Connor's rescue, it formed part of some nasty charges against him. Sheridan's letters to his wife represent the riot as an impromptu "hustle" caused by the gross injustice of the re-arrest:—

"22 May, 1798, Maidstone.

My Heart's Beloved, knowing how anxious you will be I send [this], though the Trials will be over some time to-night. Matters, we think, look well for O'Connor, but I am resolved not to be too sanguine. I got to speak to him this morning. His mind is composed, but his nerves, sadly shaken. He was greatly affected when his poor brother was brought into Court yesterday, and when the other took his hand, he burst into tears. The usage of Roger O'Connor, who is one of the finest fellows I ever saw, has been merciless beyond example. We are all very anxious and very busy, for the Counsel want assistance. Here is Fox, Grey, Erskine, Grattan, Moira, Norfolk, etc. When I got to Wrotham yesterday, I was obliged to change horses again, and the intelligence there was that the Trial was nearly over, and that they were all tried together. The latter turned out to be the case, and in my life I never spent a more miserable half-hour—for I believe I was

not longer getting to Maidstone. But when I arrived, the first thing I saw was a group of friends who gave me a welcome that convinced me I was in time. In fact, the Crown did not finish till twelve at night. The Defence has been on since, and this morning you may rely on seeing me to-morrow morning: send me a line, my soul—I was up at six, ma'am. Show the inclosed to Mr. Streatfeild,[1]—the rest of the letter is still more infamous. He may rely on its authenticity. It was produced in Court yesterday, and made a great sensation. The Attorney-General behaved very well and pledged himself to prosecute the writer with the utmost rigour, and Buller said there was no punishment on earth too much for him. He is a Clergyman and son to the agricultural Arthur Young.—Indeed, *myself*, you must wish for your poor Friend. R. B. S."

A second letter is dated the next morning—"Wednesday." It resumes the chronicle, and describes a dramatic meeting:—

"My Soul's Beloved, I know your green eyes will grieve when I tell you it is indispensably necessary for me to go to Town as well for a matter of my own as on O'Connor's account, a meeting being fixed there with Fox, Erskine, etc. Your Juryman of course told at Chiddingstone that O'Connor and all but Quigley were acquitted, and I suppose also of the fray that ensued on their attempting to execute a second movement for High Treason the moment the Verdict was given. He had no thought of escaping himself, but three or four injudicious friends, provoked at this unexpected second proceeding, endeavoured to hustle him out of Court. There were many blows struck and swords drawn: and when the soldiers got in I thought there would have been serious mischief—which I was of some use in preventing, [and] for which Buller thanked me. You may imagine that Fox and all of us were in sufficient indignation at this horrible Persecution. When O'Connor got to the Jail, he entreated the under-Sheriffs to [let] him see me. He applied to the High Sheriff,

[1] Mr. H. Streatfeild, of Chiddingstone, Sevenoaks, Kent, was her host.

who went to the Judges. Buller sent me a very handsome message that, though their Commission was ended and they exceeded their authority, they would direct that I might see him alone. By the time I got to the Jail, O'Connor was in bed in the dark under a hundred Locks and Bolts—the Jail full of soldiers, the Jailor, who had been struck in the Fray, in a furious Rage, and all pretending that they apprehended a Rescue. At last however I got to him, and was with him alone an hour. Notwithstanding his renew'd imprisonment, he was in extremely good spirits, though he had had nothing to eat or drink, the jail was in such confusion—and full of gratitude to his Friends. I shall see him again this morning, and then I set off for Town, where I believe we shall settle something to be done in the House of Commons to-morrow. When seized in the Court, he made a very forcible appeal to the Court. He saw there were those who were determined to have his Life, right or wrong; and the only Favour he asked was to be confined in the same dungeon with his brother.—My Life's Heart, I have not a moment more, I will write from town. Peremptorily fix the Hour when I will see your eyes at Chiddingstone. We pant for a few quiet days. R. S."[1]

Next year, and in Parliament, Sheridan warmly defended his evidence at O'Connor's trial against hints of disloyalty: he never retracted it, and he maintained that O'Connor's favourers were those least likely to connive at foreign intervention in British affairs.[2]

Through these letters the scene rises before us more vividly than its sequels. O'Coigley was hanged and beheaded in the June of the following year, and he died like a hero. Dr. Parr wept over his fate, and when Mackintosh called him a rascal, the Doctor made his famous reply, "Yes, Jamie, he was a bad

[1] For the foregoing cf. Sheridan MSS., "Annual Registers" for 1798 and 1799, Fitzpatrick's "Secret Service under Pitt," and Rogers's "Table-Talk"; the trial of course was reported.

[2] Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 321 (Speech of February 11, 1799, on the Irish Union).

man, but he might have been worse. He was an Irishman, but he might have been a Scotsman; he was a priest, but he might have been a lawyer; he was a Republican, but he might have been an apostate." After four months' confinement in Ireland Arthur O'Connor was pardoned, not however without strong insinuations by the United Irishmen that a price had been paid for his reconciliation with Pitt. He subsequently went abroad, and died in 1852 at Bignon. In 1799 Lord Thanet and Fergusson were themselves charged before Kenyon with endeavouring O'Connor's rescue, and Sheridan's evidence on that occasion—when he paused and halted in some of his answers—was viewed with more than suspicion at Holland House, and indeed supposed by its Sibyl, to have been responsible for Lord Thanet's fine and imprisonment.

But ere Lady Holland's imputations are cited, it will be well to repeat Sheridan's actual words in the witness-box, and to remember that Lord Thanet was a kinsman of the Dorsets, his father's befrienders. Sheridan's examiner was his too-clever friend Erskine, and his cross-examiner was Law, Warren Hastings's champion. The dialogue presents a dramatic colloquy:—

"ERSKINE.—Do you know Mr. Fergusson?

SHERIDAN.—Perfectly.

E.—If he had been upon the table flourishing and waving a stick in the manner that has been described, in his bar dress, must you not have seen it?

S.—Yes; it must have been a remarkable thing indeed for a counsel in his bar dress to have a stick flourishing in his hand. He had a roll of paper in his hand.

E.—Does that enable you to swear that Mr. Fergusson was not in that situation?

S.—Certainly.

E.—Do you think if he had taken such a part in the riot in the presence of the judges that you could have observed it?

S.—I must have observed it."

So far, be it noted, Fergusson's acts were defended. Then followed a tough tussle with the future Lord Ellenborough:—

"L.—You have said you saw Lord Thanet going towards the judges as if he were going to complain. Did you hear him make any complaint to the judges?

S.—I did not hear him, certainly.

L. (*beating round the bush*).—I will ask you whether you do or do not believe that Lord Thanet and Mr. Fergusson meant to favour O'Connor's escape, upon your solemn oath?

S. (*with hesitating caution*).—Am I to give an answer to a question which amounts merely to an opinion?

L.—I ask as an inference from their conduct as it fell under your observation whether you think they or either of them meant to favour Mr. O'Connor's escape, upon your solemn oath?

S. (*fencing*).—Upon my solemn oath I saw them do nothing that could be at all auxiliary to an escape.

L.—That is not an answer to my question.

S.—I do not wish to be understood to blink any question, and if I had been standing there and been asked whether I should have pushed or stood aside, I should have no objection to answer that question."

Law reiterated his query, and once more reminded Sheridan that he was on oath. This is the section of Sheridan's evidence that Lady Holland makes answerable for Lord Thanet's conviction.

"S.—The learned counsel need not remind me that I am upon my oath: I know as well as the learned counsel that I am upon my oath, and I will say that I saw nothing that could be auxiliary to an escape."

Law pressed the question home as regarded both the defendants, and he asked if from observation Sheridan believed that either of them had connived at O'Connor's escape.

"S. (*pausing*).—I desire to know how far I am obliged to answer that question. I certainly will answer it in this way, that from what they did, being a mere observer of what passed, I should not think myself justified in saying that either of them did. Am I to say whether I think they would have been glad if he had escaped? That is what you are pressing me for."

"No man can misunderstand me," shouted Law, and when Sheridan replied that he "should have no right to conclude that they were persons assisting the escape," Law insisted on knowing whether Sheridan "*believed*" that they intended to favour it. Sheridan then justly retorted that he had already answered. But Lord Kenyon interposed and told him that unless he gave a direct reply they "must draw the natural inference."

"I have no doubt," said Sheridan, "that they *wished* he

might escape, but from anything I saw them do I have no right to conclude that they did."

Law persevered in his "I must have an answer," and Sheridan assured him that he was mistaken if he thought he could "entrap" him. Erskine intervened with "It is hardly a legal question," and Lord Kenyon curtly remarked, "It is not an illegal question." More fencing on the old lines took place until Law suddenly questioned him on facts: on facts Sheridan stood firm.

"L.—I will ask you whether it was not *previously* intended that he should escape if possible?"

The "previously" sounds ambiguous, for whether or not Sheridan himself at a late moment had urged O'Connor to be off, his whole point in the letter to his wife was that under the provocation of a second arrest, "injudicious friends" had "hustled" O'Connor out, and that every movement had been spontaneous; nor in Court was any suggestion made of Sheridan's connivance. "Certainly *not*," answered Sheridan, "the contrary." Asked next if he had any intimation that the attempt was designed, he denied it, adding "there was a loose rumour of another warrant, which was afterwards contradicted." Not till then had it been debated whether such a writ could be issued before O'Connor was discharged. Positively, there was no idea of a rescue. "There was no friend of Mr. O'Connor's, I believe, but saw with regret any attempt on his part to leave the Court."

Sheridan's position was doubtless equivocal, nor was the last sentence quite candid; but surely it was not a sentence that could harm Lord Thanet. Erskine, who stuck to facts, not opinions, re-examined his man. He inquired whether he had seen any overt act; Sheridan returned an emphatic negative. He had stated upon oath that everyone in the narrow gateway endeavoured to stop O'Connor, and he had remarked this the more particularly because "there being a common feeling among Englishmen, and he being acquitted," he thought "they might form a plan to let him escape." He persisted that he

had seen no definite act, and that he did not believe that the defendants had taken part in rescuing O'Connor.

Now let us listen to Lady Holland's "Journal" and observe that she is silent as to Fergusson, who was associated with Lord Thanet in Sheridan's cross-examination, though she circulates the rumour that Sheridan, after pushing a note of warning over to O'Connor, induced Fergusson to be silent about it when he came to read his own defence to the Court:—

"The Duke of Bedford and Lord Thanet called in their way back from St. Anne's, where they had been to consult with Mr. Fox upon the propriety of the measure suggested by Erskine. The measure was that Lord Thanet should write a letter to the Attorney-General declaring upon his honour that he was innocent of the charge against him, etc., etc. Mr. Fox disapproved of that scheme, as it seemed like begging for mercy. The evidence was so contradictory that even Kenyon, who is bitter against them, acknowledged in his summing-up the difficulty of ascertaining the truth. There is no doubt whatever that Lord T.'s activity was merely defensive; nor is there any more that Sheridan's evidence got him found guilty. When questioned by Law, S., instead of answering immediately, paused, and then replied satisfactorily to the interrogation; but this silence of several minutes previous to replying sufficed in the minds of the jury, and it is allowed on all hands that their verdict proceeded from their conviction that Sheridan was wavering between falsehood and truth, and that the first triumphed. This was confirmed by Law, in a solemn, impressive manner, repeating, 'You will recollect, Mr. Sheridan, that you are upon your oath.'. . . Those who were really the stimulators of the enterprise were Sheridan himself and Dennis O'Brien.[1] It is even a doubt whether Fergusson was apprised of the scheme. S. was adroit enough to persuade him to suppress in his defence the truth of a circumstance that, as it appeared in the charge, made against him. Just before

[1] D. O'Brien was a great friend of Fox and Sheridan, and it was he who while Sheridan lay dying wrote an indignant letter as to the neglect of him to the *Morning Post*.

the scuffle F[ergusson] leaned across the table to whisper O'Connor. The truth of the whisper was an endeavour to deliver unseen a note from Sheridan to O'Connor, the words of which were as follows:—'As soon as the sentence is passed, leap over the bar, run to the right, and we will manage the rest.' Had this been stated, F. might have escaped, but he was persuaded it would have been unhandsome to involve an unsuspected person, for so little was S. supposed to have assisted, that *in court* he received thanks from the judges for having exerted himself to quell the disturbance. S. since he gained such credit as a witness in the State trials (Horne Tooke's) by his wit and repartee can never give a direct answer, and is always more occupied to gain applause by his reply than to serve those in favour of whom he is called."[1]

Sheridan is here taxed with the hideous treachery of sacrificing one friend by acting a hesitating part, another, by inducing him to burke the blame which belonged to himself, and both, by leaving them to suffer rather than lose an opportunity of displaying his powers. It is hard, however, to perceive where Sheridan "shone" in his answers, or what chance was afforded for "repartee." And Lady Holland's "there-is-no-doubt-whatevers" are scarcely legal tender. It would be absurd to think that Lord Thanet was fined and sent to the Tower solely or mainly through Sheridan's manner, nor would the jury have condemned him save for distinct proof of actions exceeding "self-defence." Fergusson received a mild sentence, so he was uninjured,[2] and Sheridan's missive to O'Connor could not have been the signal for the riot. Moreover, his hesitation in the box only occurred when he was asked his opinion and was entitled to pause. He spoke positively enough when interrogated as to facts. It is clear that Lady Holland was unacquainted with the whole evidence, and ignorant of the details. Sheridan had been dare-devil enough to urge O'Connor to fly, but he did not join in the

[1] Holland House MSS., Lady Holland's "Journal," since published and edited by Lord Ilchester.

[2] He was afterwards Attorney-General at Calcutta.

tumult, nor is it probable that his evidence prejudiced the jury. On the other hand, it *was* dubious on Sheridan's part to have prompted escape and then to have been thanked by the judge for helping to quell the disturbance. But if Lady Holland really deemed Sheridan a double-dyed traitor, and did not merely retail the rumours of prejudice and vexation, why did she perpetually invite him years afterwards not only to dine, but to stay at her house? Once more, in all the stories adverse to Sheridan afterwards told by Lord Thanet to Moore, not one regarding this incident is mentioned, nor does he impugn Sheridan's good faith to his friends; on the contrary, he was among those who paid a last tribute of respect at his funeral. Holland House was long a whispering-gallery against Sheridan, and we refuse to believe these odious accusations just because they seem to fit neither the facts nor his character. The scandals and irritations of a moment are never proof positive, and it is always hard to pronounce judgment in such ambiguous cases. But the reader is now in full possession of the material and must decide for himself.

In the March of 1801 fell the startling blow of Pitt's resignation, or of his abdication as it might well be styled. This is not the place to track either his attitude towards the Catholic question, which was his alleged reason for retirement, or the intrigues which Lord Auckland and his brother-in-law, Archbishop Moore, set on foot to prejudice the King. Sheridan certainly never believed that the King's resistance to Pitt's pro-Catholic inclinations was the true cause of the First Minister's unexpected withdrawal. He declared that he would as soon believe that the ministry had gone out "because they had discovered the longitude." They had, he continued, circulated a paper in Ireland attributing the failure of a certain measure to the Sovereign's opposition, and directing the Irish Catholics to look to *them* for hope of relief. And he added that their stalking-horse perilously approached high treason.[1] All Pitt's real motives will perhaps never be revealed,

[1] Cf. his statement on May 14, 1802 (Speeches, Vol. III., p. 413)

but the state of his health was one. And the ply of the Grenvilles adds another. Everyone remembers the promise of a golden age for Ireland when Pitt sent Lord Fitzwilliam over in 1795 to replace Lord Westmoreland, but few know, perhaps, that his sudden recall on the plea that his zeal for Catholic relief had compromised the Government, was due as much to the pique of the Grenvilles at exclusion from the Castle, as to graver causes.[1] All but Lord Grenville were now both hungry and angry, and Pitt had to propitiate his cousins. Sheridan advocated justice to the Catholics and redress for Ireland with might and main, just as he advocated—even in 1787—the cause of the slaves, and from first to last the freedom of the Press.[2] He took the Irish view, the standpoint of sympathy. But Pitt took the English view, and his strong point was security. True, had it not been for the King's revived prejudices, he would have palliated his measure of union by a full Catholic emancipation—the proposal which Lord Grenville himself combated as he had combated even Parliamentary reform.[3] But Pitt's purposed concession sprang from policy and not from feeling; he still symbolised "my three per cent. consols," as Lord Mornington (writing in 1798)

[1] Cf. the letters and documents in Hist. MS. Comm., Dropmore Papers, Vol. II., pp. 597, 637, 647, 649, 653, 655, 683; and Vol. III., pp. 2, 11—14, 17, 34 and 35.

[2] On April 4, 1798 (Newspaper Regulation Bill), he made a stirring speech on this subject. He asked if his young friend Canning's *Anti-Jacobin* were included in this effort to restrain newspaper freedom. Cf. Hansard, XXXIII., 1418. The message quoted from this speech by the D. N. B. does not appear in Hansard's report. Sheridan (according to Hansard) spoke also on the third reading (June 13), when the extreme Sir F. Burdett quoted the King to the effect that "the Press, like the air, is a chartered libertine," adding that "the puny chastity of the son's character will not admit of any libertine excess." Wilberforce then "felt shocked at the language used by the hon. baronet," but Wilberforce was not always regarded as a paragon. Windham termed him "a malicious little imp." Notes for some of Sheridan's utterances on the slave-trade survive among his Papers.

[3] In 1792. Cf. Russell's "Life of Fox," Vol. II., p. 283, and for the other instance, Hist. MS. Comm., Dropmore Papers, Vol. IV., p. 43.

styled his pet minister after the duel at Wimbledon with Tierney.[1]

Sheridan spoke often and fiercely on Pitt's projects for Irish union. From one speech, a fine passage on the merits has already been given in connection with Pitt's commercial propositions fifteen years earlier. Another passage on the sentiment may be cited here:—

"My country," he urged on January 23, 1799, "has claims upon me which I am not more proud to acknowledge than ready to liquidate to the full measure of my ability. Is there any man who can wish to do less, or has the whole system of human connection and the economy of human passions been changed and perverted with those changes in the political world, from which some derive rank and emolument by the prostitution of integrity and all the virtues?" There was a time, he said, when a question of this nature would have been denounced as an interference with the independence of the Irish Parliament. The question now, was the very existence of that Parliament. The present measure really invited France to share in the plunder of Irish liberties. "Sir, I do say, it is the conduct of English ministers towards the Irish nation from which only we can have any reason to apprehend danger. By dividing the native and constitutional defenders of Ireland, they sow among them the seeds of treason, and encourage the attempts of the enemy on that unfortunate country." He regretted the recent conspiracies. "There might have been much of the cause of the revolt concealed under the measures of the Government, but if the Irish should at any future period awake from the slumbers of that sloth which the slavery of union is to occasion, how are they to be replied to if they should say, 'You offered to us your assistance against domestic and foreign enemies; we accepted of it and gave you affection and gratitude, and the irreproachable pledge of all the support in our power to return. But having enabled us to repel invasion and suppress rebellion, you took from us our Parliament with

[1] Cf. Russell's "Life of Fox," Vol. II., p. 385.

your forty thousand soldiers, and dissipating our independence, you inflicted on us a union, to which our fellow-subjects, famished and bled, could give no opposition, and this not by force, but by an act of negative intimidation'?" And he scathed the proposal that Ireland's Parliament should, for the name's sake, be turned into what would now be called a county council:—

"A parliament! A sort of national vestry for the parish of Ireland, sitting in a kind of mock-legislative capacity after being ignobly degraded from the rank of representatives of an independent people, and deprived of the functions of an inquisitorial power, exercising and enjoying the greatest authority that any parliament can possess. . . . With respect to the enemies of the British Government, it had two enemies in Ireland, 'Poverty and Ignorance,' and unless it could be shown that the present measure could remove these or prevent scenes of distress like those in Dublin alone, where twelve thousand labourers out of employment lived or starved with their families on the raspings of bread, he must be unfriendly to the measure. As to the cavil of party opposition, he respected too much the memory of Burke, he respected himself too much, though of no importance, to sing a death-song in this instance over the *manes* of party."

In a later speech he commented on the disproportion of those Irish who supported and those who opposed the measure. The former were only in Cork and Limerick, and they were to be sopped by a new dockyard. The minister, to gain his ends, "held out a bribe to the South, and threw out a threat to the North—some inducements are also held out to the Roman Catholics, a diminution of tithes and an establishment for their clergy." "But why not realise such promises now?[1] As

[1] In a still later speech of February 11, he went at length into the Catholic question and asserted that Lord Fitzwilliam had only been sent over to dupe the Catholics for a time. He believed neither in the promise nor the performance. Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 311. In a speech too of February 7, he discussed what the position would be of the Catholics under English domination. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 308. This was the speech which the Russian ambassador, writing to Lord Grenville, styled "une déclamation inflammatoire": cf. Hist. MS. Comm., Dropmore Papers, Vol. IV., p. 461.

for 'French principles,' which were always foisted into the argument, what did Jacobinism mean? Was it not Jacobinism that pretended to make other states more free, independent and prosperous than it found them, that called on other countries to resign their freedom, their independence and their constitution, with a promise to substitute something better in their place? Who now were the Jacobins?" And in a subsequent speech he summed up the substance of the matter, from whatever side it was approached, by saying that the ministerial aim was the destruction of Grattan's Parliament—"*delenda est Carthago.*"[1]

Pitt's measure was eventually thrust on an unwilling people by wholesale bribery and promotions. His own ranks were at loggerheads, cabals abounded, and, abroad, Duncan's Dutch victory had hardly compensated for the disasters of the Helder expedition. The worn pilot who weathered the storm resigned under a compact to support the son of his family doctor at the helm. Addington's succession was a stroke of burlesque, and Sheridan thus wrote to his wife:—" . . . Pitt, Grenville, Windham, Dundas and Lord Spencer are gone out. The Duke of Portland remains, and Addington, the late Speaker, for he resigned the chair to-day, is First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. I find it very ridiculous, and no one thinks it can last, though I think Fox has contrived to put us out of the question at present. However, while Hecca likes, better that it should be so. I am happy in our exclusion. There is a grand ferment, great cabals and great speculation. My own surmise is that it will end in their calling in Lord Lansdowne to their aid, and introducing Tierney, and (but say

[1] Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 270—324. In another speech of February 17, 1800 (*ibid.*, p. 350), he twitted the Government for calling the Associations Jacobins, and yet treating with Jacobins at Lille. The Jacobins, he said, were extinct. "They had stung themselves to death, and died by their own poison." It was after the former speeches that Sheridan supported Burdett on his motion for a report on the Coldbaths Fields Prison. And, as he was then reproached for appearing, he said that there was no pleasing people: he was blamed when he stayed away, and not welcomed when he came.

this to no one), Grey on the pretence of making peace with a sort of approbation from Fox." [1]

He was mistaken. The pompous manikin, who once strutted across the House in a military uniform, lasted for three years longer, and Sheridan grew fond of his good sense and good humour. Lansdowne was impossible, but Fox and Grey—the peace party—soon found other combinations. The warlike Grenvilles reinforced them, nor was it long before even Pitt, sick of his substitute, lent them informal assistance. "Pigging it, three in a truckle bed," Sheridan styled this uncanny league, and it will be remembered that some forty years later Disraeli spoke in his Maynooth speech of the main benefit proposed for the Irish priesthood as the improvement of "two in a bed."

"Adversity makes strange bedfellows," and this last surprise is not the least in a long chapter of surprises.

[1] Sheridan MSS., "Tuesday"? March, 1801.

## CHAPTER XII

### A DISSOLVING VIEW

### [From the Addington Administration to the Death of Fox.]

(March, 1801—September, 1806)

"Oh me! with what strict patience have I sat
To see a King transformèd to a gnat;
To see great Hercules whipping a gig
And profound Solomon to tune a jig,
And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys,
And critic Timon laugh at idle toys!"
Shakespeare, "*Love's Labour's Lost*," Act IV., Sc. III.

It was a farce to install Addington, and till his tyrant sent him packing, the political scenery shifted every minute. Those out were eager to slip in; those in office constantly changed places. Everything seemed in flux, and yet never was the need of leadership more urgent. The old scarecrows of the French Revolution had been swept away by the hurricane of Napoleon that shook Europe with its intermittent gusts.

Addington was shabbily treated; Pitt used, abused, and finally deposed him. Yet his head for figures was far better than Pitt's, and indeed he and the mediocre Perceval seem the sole financiers of that unfinancial hour. Pitt had issued Consols at a price which meant five per cent. interest for the nation. Addington at least tried to unify the debt. And his war preparations, though ridiculed, were well advised, far better grounded than Pitt's abortive Additional Forces Act, which failed to raise a territorial army. But Addington was insignificant. None would believe in him, though he held himself up on a ridiculous pedestal, and indeed was the pink of commonplace—a man after the King's own heart. George was once more half mad when Addington came in; he was sane



RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

from the original portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence

(in the possession of Sir E. P. Stracey).

enough when he went out, but, sane or mad, he always cherished one whom he could trust and who never played the perplexing game of political blind-man's-buff.

Addington's Cabinet remained weak. Its main pillars were Jenkinson's son (Lord Hawkesbury, later Lord Liverpool), who filled one of the secretaryships, and Lord Chancellor Eldon —the dull embodiment of Hanoverian Toryism. The Secretary-at-War was Charles Yorke, a Harrow schoolfellow of Sheridan, chiefly known for his exclusion of strangers from the House during the debate on the Walcheren expedition nine years onwards. The Duke of Portland, vacuous as ever, and amiable, presided over the Council,[1] the dilatory Chatham looked after the Ordnance, and the shuttlecock Tierney was Treasurer of the Navy. Most of the rest were pedantic triflers, particular in small things, but, on the whole, "nothing in particular"; Sheridan compared their elements to the dregs at the bottom of a good bottle of Tokay. And, arrayed against this combination, the strength of the strong was frittered away by being splintered into ten or fifteen factions.[2]

One day Sheridan called to discuss matters with Fox at South Street, and was amazed and amused, as he told his wife, to discover his friend already closeted with Lord Grenville. Fox, who stood out for peace at any price, with Grenville, Pitt's bellicose Foreign Secretary: Fox, the warm and wilful, with Grenville, the cold and calculating—a curious alliance. And one fraught with far-reaching influence on the future, for when once Grenville managed to absorb some of Fox's popularity, Grey, Fox's political heir, found his enthusiasms chilled, and in 1811 and 1812 lived to rue this unnatural coalition. But if Fox had failed to melt the gods above, he was now ready to move the infernal deities rather than not upset Addington. Sheridan at last knew what to expect. And on Pitt's side the

[1] A ribald wit asked the riddle, "Why is the Duke of Portland like an old woman?" with the answer, "Because he is past bearing."

[2] Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 405 (Speech of May 14, 1802). Among the Sheridan Papers given by Moore is a document of 1804 by Sheridan on the then state of parties in the House.

intrigues proved as bewildering. Lord Auckland, who could seldom forego mystery, worked underground to procure Pitt's consent to return, and his "paper" conspiracy, which failed, became notorious. Canning, Sheridan's early fosterling, manœuvred also: Canning, who loved strokes and surprises, who, it was said, *acted* the actor in all his speeches: Canning, the all-accomplished and consummately clever, but the inherently little, though he showed flashes of greatness: Canning, the misunderstood man of ideas among the plain men of prejudice, the artistic Celt, who no more than Sheridan was ever trusted by Anglo-Saxons—Canning, too, tried secretly to contrive Pitt's recall to place, for Pitt's power had not departed. The ex-minister had pledged himself to uphold Addington; the giant had promised to carry the pigmy on his broad shoulders. Yet after Pitt had been scared by the chance of a fresh Regency in 1803, he threw his weight into the scale of the Fox-Grenville alliance, and it was said that the price of Addington's overthrow was its admission into Pitt's Cabinet. A letter from the Prince of March 30, 1804, exists among Sheridan's Papers, apparently about Erskine's inclusion as Attorney-General in these premature arrangements. In a speech of sad and sorry explanation which Sheridan was to make during 1812, he reiterated how much he had always disapproved of coalitions, how he had misliked the great league of Fox with North, and this later projected union of Pitt with Fox.

Throughout the three next years it would be interesting to trace Fox's fluctuating feelings and Pitt's fluctuating actions. No sooner had the Amiens Peace been ratified than Pitt grew restive and not over-scrupulous as to the means of upsetting his adhesive dwarf. Always distant, he gradually took a tone of offence with Addington. Accommodations were tried, the phantom minister by turns whined and condescended. But when it was clear at last that nothing could avail, and that the King must lament the loss of his trusty Addington and Eldon, the resigner of office conscientiously provided for all his on-hangers, promptly joined the Cabinet of his reconciled foe, only to quit it a few months afterwards, received

his peerage, and eventually flourished in Perceval's feeble administration.

As for Fox, glimpses of his moods have appeared in our prologue, and they may be found throughout the contemporary memoirs. Despite Napoleon's omnipresence, he thundered for peace; whereas Sheridan, quick to feel the national pulse, was fierce for war. Whenever Sheridan was warlike and Addingtonian, Fox decried, mistrusted, and sneered at him. Whenever Sheridan helped Fox in his stock test-trials of strength—the Catholic Church or the state of the Nation, or, even now, the iniquities of Pitt (with whom, however, Fox would vote to outdo Addington),—then he half-praised him. Then he was "going right." At all other times his "levity" and "vanity" were "disgusting" and incurable. He met him at mutual friends' houses, and at such times Sheridan, he said, looked "sheepish." The schoolboy knew that he was a truant, while Fox, as he neared his end, played the political pedagogue with a vengeance; often sublime, sometimes petty, always narrow, even in his widest causes; the friend of all mankind, the devotee of insurgent freedom, but, at home, a complaining and sequestered taskmaster. Such, broadly speaking, seems to have been his attitude during this interval before his last, brief spell of power.

And another element again pervaded the stage. The Prince, who had perforce turned King's friend directly the French Revolution alarmed the Throne, reappeared as a political factor, and at this moment he wavered between Pitt and Fox. Once more Sheridan played his old part of Grand Vizier at Carlton House,[1] whither he was now frequently summoned for secret confabulations that lasted from midnight till four in the

[1] Among the letters preserved at this time is a copy, in Add. MS. 29764, f. 73, which runs as under:—"Dear Sheridan, Pray call upon me, be it but for five minutes, as soon as you return home or receive this note, as I have something of consequence to say to you. Sincerely yours, G.P. I dine at home and alone, if you wish for a mouthful of dinner." About this time (as we know from a note in his papers) Sheridan wrote a letter for the Prince to the King.

morning, and often without supper or "a drop of wine."[1] At the opening of 1803, when the King's state was parlous, it was thought again that the Prince might be Regent, and that Fox would step into Addington's shoes. Fox, who affected to despise the Prince, none the less waited on and listened to him.[2] Pitt kept aloof, but his emissaries were active. As for the Grenvilles, their haste to treat was almost indecent, and they posted down for a great conference at Stowe, only to find that all had ended in smoke, while the world laughed over their solemnity. But Sheridan, though high in favour, by no means bent the knee to all his Prince's whims. He even dared his displeasure by opposing his wish for active military service. And, a little later, when Queen Caroline's affairs had been subjected to the "delicate investigation" (a printed record of which had to be suppressed), he refused to humour him at the expense of a wronged and warm-hearted, if erring and slatternly,

[1] Sheridan MSS., "Sheridan to his wife, February 27, 1804" (when the Prince had just recovered from a serious illness). Cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 249.

[2] Among the Holland House MSS. and copied in Add. MS. 29764, f. 73, is a most friendly letter from Fox to Sheridan of January 12, 1803, about a meeting at Lord Moira's. It shows how much Sheridan now counted with the Prince, and it runs as follows:—"Dear Sheridan, I am not writing to dun you for a letter, as I conclude by not hearing there is nothing more going forward. Is the doctor [Addington] to take office, and what office? Is he to remain with us or to be a Peer? I hope *such of our friends as see Canning* take care to rub his Nose in all this well. Your's ever, C. J. Fox. N.B. The meeting will be at Lord Moira's if he is in town on Monday at two. Bonaparte has certainly sent an offer to negotiate. It is said to be contained in a letter to the King. Mulgrave is, I believe, to write to Talleyrand civilly, and say they are waiting to hear what he has to propose. I know no more. I had a long conversation with Lord St. Vincent and find your old friend the Doctor to be a still more impudent Rogue than I supposed him. . . . P.S.—I am told the Prince has heard rumours that the Queen and the Duke of York are to associate with him in the Regency. Both he and Mrs. Fitzherbert are alarmed to the last degree. Surely he ought, after what you told him, to be easy about so senseless a report. I think it worth while for you to see *her* at least, if not him, to tranquillise them." He goes on to say that the rumour as to the Duke is quite unfounded, and he concludes, "There can be no doubt of our kicking it to the Devil. Do put these poor people at ease if you can."

woman. Yet his influence still prevailed in the princely counsels. George was always requiring, dining, flattering, exploiting the inexhaustible Sheridan. And over and over again he begged, and begged in vain, to mark his sense of gratitude. All that Sheridan would now hear of was for the son whose desperate scrapes had become as public as his brilliant gifts and social acceptability. Sheridan had to pay £1,500 for young Alcibiades in a divorce suit. He took, and with a pang, £8,000 from his royal friend to forward that son's political career, while further sums had to be expended on the debts of one who, when in straits, would sign himself "temporally yours."[1] Creevey once saw the unruffled Sheridan, whose calm and unpresuming manner left nothing to be desired, supplicate the heir-apparent with tears in his eyes for assistance to Tom; and yet he twice refused posts for him which, according to his foes, were furtively assigned to others. In 1804 Tom had been made aide-de-camp to Lord Moira in Edinburgh; he was now appointed Muster-Master-General of Ireland. During the previous year he had eloped with the fair Scotch heiress, Miss Caroline Callander, and settled down in a happy marriage, which founded a long, illustrious line.[2] But he can never be said to have settled up.

[1] Cf. Eg. MS. 1976, f. 16, Tom Sheridan to Major Downe. For the divorce suit, cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 164. Tom at first stood for a Cornish borough; cf. *ibid.*, f. 197.

[2] Tom was married on June 21, 1805. Cf. Eg. MS. 2137, f. 162. The newspapers rang with his elopement. His children included, of course, the mother of the late Lord Dufferin, Mrs. Norton, and the charming Duchess of Somerset, who was queen of beauty at the Eglinton Tournament. His eldest son Brinsley himself eloped with Miss Marcia Colquhoun Grant, also an heiress, and through him Frampton Court in Dorsetshire descends to his son Algernon, the present head of the Sheridan family. He had two other sons, Frank and Charles, both literary, who died bachelors in 1826 and 1847 respectively. Brinsley's elopement nearly caused a duel, and the papers concerning it are now in the British Museum; cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 211 *et seq.* In 1801 Tom had been allotted an income of £500 a year from the theatre, while Sheridan retained an annual £2,000; in 1806 Tom was made sole manager of Drury Lane, and about the same time he also became joint proprietor with Arnold of the Lyceum; cf. *ibid.*, ff. 160d., 164, 165d. Lord Kinnaird built "a very elegant cottage" for Mr. Thomas Sheridan in 1813; cf. *ibid.*, f. 168.

And already the first seeds of that awful, inherited ailment, which sent him roaming in search of sunshine, had begun to increase his father's distresses—a sorrow enhanced by his general popularity, for nobody, not even the moralists, had a bad word for Tom Sheridan.[1] Nor were minor forms of vexation wanting. In 1803 Sheridan had hoped for admission into the sacred band of the French Academy, but Haydn (or, as some said, the scholar Heyne) was chosen in his stead, and the man who could loom large in politics and arrange a prince's policy, stooped to vent his vexation in epigram on epigram about this disappointment. The verses are not good, but their incentive was worse, and such trifles only intercept the political prospect which re-demands our survey.

The dilemmas which now hampered the Prince were two. In the first place, while he wanted to shake hands with Fox, he dared not, in the face of his father's relapse, run counter to Addington. And, in the second, he feared any reopening of the Catholic question, which he would have favoured but for that father's recurrent lunacies. He had learned the lesson of 1789, and he knew that George's returning senses would brand any compromise with that problem as rank treason to his coronation oath and his conscience. Some *rapprochement* between Fox and Pitt was still held probable, for on this matter of Catholic relief both might still be united.[2]

At this juncture Sheridan steadied the Prince to Foxite leanings. He studied the prejudices of a King whose gratitude

[1] There are many anecdotes about him in the tattle of the time, and in Eg. MS. 1975, f. 212, is a coloured caricature of the young aide-de-camp at Edinburgh returning early in the morning, while the enraged Lord Moira in a dressing-gown opens the door. The authorities for Tom's scrapes and debts come partly from Sheridan's letters, especially the late one of retrospect dated "RICHMOND, April 20, 1810"; some of Tom's letters and numbers of newspaper cuttings in the Eg. MS. at the British Museum. Among the Sheridan MSS. are several letters from the Prince to Sheridan, beseeching his presence and advice, and one from Sheridan to the Prince about Tom.

[2] Cf. *post*, p. 318.

he had earned at last; for when a madman had fired at George in Drury Lane, he it was who had calmed the princesses, secured the offender, and improvised an extra verse for the National Anthem, which he promptly ordered to be played.[1] But Sheridan, though never weary of praising Fox, refused to endorse his policy of peace at any price. He could not approve of terms with Napoleon. When the Volunteer movement was started, none was a more enthusiastic Volunteer, and the Foxites of Devonshire House—which he still frequented—scoffed at him accordingly.[2] In these respects

[1] Hadfield's attempt in 1800. The verse began "From the Assassin's blow." Among the Holland House MSS. is a letter describing the scene. "The King," it says, "was so delighted with Sheridan's behaviour to the Princesses. He prevented their going into their box by saying that a pick-pocket was taken in the Pit which made a riot and required his presence, and he begged their Royal Highnesses to wait in the room. The King will be grateful to his latest hour for this sensibility." Sheridan and Tom were to go to Court. Later on the King spoke to Sheridan, and told him that he (the King) in keeping unmoved had only done his duty. Sheridan answered that the people followed His Majesty's cue. The caricatures made the most of this situation. Sheridan has left (Holland House MSS.) a number of jingling verses on the National Anthem applied to politics. Two examples will suffice:—

"From Pepper Ardens law,
From Bonaparte's maw,
God save the King,
French war, and want of bread,
From Portland's stone and lead
God save etc.,

From Roses Knavery,
From Indian slavery
God save etc.,
From Chatham's nonsense
And Eldon's conscience
God save the King."

[2] "I hear an admirable quotation of yours upon S. and his prepared uniform," wrote Fox from St. Anne's to the mocker Georgiana in August, 1803, "Motley, your only wear, should be his motto"; cf. "The Two Duchesses," p. 185. Sheridan's speech on the Volunteers of August 10, 1803, was loudly applauded; cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 443. In it he emphasised a "contempt of death," and in enumerating the spaces that could be devoted to drill, he named Lord's Cricket Ground, "hired at an

he backed Addington, and many were his dinners with the placid platitudinarian at the White House in Richmond Park, which the King had presented to the man whom he delighted to honour.

Though fitful in his attendances at the House, Sheridan made some of his greatest anti-Napoleonic hits after Nelson had triumphed at Copenhagen.[1] Two speeches of 1802 may be recalled: they sound something of an Imperial note. The first, delivered on May 14, violently assailed the truce of Amiens. The previous ministers, he said, had left no choice between "an expensive, bloody and fruitless war" and "a perilous and hollow peace." Was it a peace that could yield "real repose"?

"It is lamentable," urged Sheridan, "to see you all split up into miserable parties, when your *great enemy* is uniting every possible means of extending his power. You are squabbling about the measuring of ribands and tapes and the paltry revenues of Malta, when much greater objects are before you. The events of every day seem to call more and more for the expression of the public feeling that a time will come when French encroachments and oppression must cease, and when the voice of this country must be clearly raised against their atrocious and tyrannical conduct. The right honourable gentleman (Dundas) says, 'We have preserved our honour.' Honour depends more on the manner of doing a thing than on the thing itself. We had a great armament at the time of the negotiation, but I do not hear that it carried any point whatever. 'This,' says he, 'is a peace in which we relinquish nothing and gain much.' Will any man of common sense undertake to prove that? . . . What did we go to war for? Why, to prevent French aggrandisement. Have we done that? No. Then we were to rescue Holland. Is that accomplished or relinquished? No. Brabant was a *sine quâ non*. Is it

enormous expense." For the preceding, cf. the MS. authorities already cited in the "Overture" to this work, Part II.; various memoirs of the period; and the Prince's much later statement to Croker.

[1] After Nelson's death Sheridan composed an inscription for his monument. No trace of it, however, has been found.

gained? No. Then some *security* or *indemnity*. Are they obtained? No. The late minister told us 'that the example of a Jacobin Government in Europe, founded on the ruins of the holy altar and the tomb of a martyred monarch, was a spectacle so dreadful and infectious to Christendom, that we could never be safe while it existed, and could do nothing short of our very last effort for its destruction.' Now, sir, let us see what we have got. What have we laid out for all these fine words which at last gave way to *security* and *indemnity*? Why, near two hundred thousand lives and three hundred millions of money. And we have gotten Ceylon and Trinidad. Ceylon should be named 'Security' and Trinidad 'Indemnity.' . . . Is this armed repose, this hollow peace, then, the fruit of our long and glorious war?" Was Bonaparte an extirpator of Jacobinism? Would "the child of sin destroy his mother? . . . Suppose you make him King of Europe at once, he will soon extirpate all the Jacobinism that infects it. My alarms begin when the alarms of some persons cease." Bonaparte was the great peril. . . . "I would rather have given Malta to France, and have taken the Cape, than have made this absurd arrangement." The Cape was surrendered, yet Dundas had said that he who surrendered it ought to lose his head. "There sits the minister, however, with his head safe on his shoulders. 'Let France have colonies,' was now the cry. 'Oh, yes; let her have a good trade that she may be afraid of war,' says a learned member, 'that is the way to make him love peace.' . . . But could this hollow treaty be broken off? Who, as a fact, was the real minister?—

"Is there then an interior and exterior minister?—one who appears to the world, and another secret, irresponsible, directing minister? . . . The ex-ministers are quite separate and distinct, and yet they and the new ministers are all honourable friends. What is the meaning of this mysterious connection? . . . I should like to support the present minister on fair ground, but what is he? A sort of outside passenger, or rather a man leading the horses round a corner, while reins, whip and all are in the hands of the coachman on the box (*looking at Pitt's elevated*

*seat three or four benches above that of the Treasury*). I remember a fable of Aristophanes; it is translated from Greek into decent English—I mention this for the country gentlemen. It is of a man who sat so long on a seat . . . that he grew to it. When Hercules pulled him off he left all the sitting part of the man behind him." This is the quotation to which reference was made in a part of our prologue concerning oratorical plagiarism; but Sheridan pursued his comments on Pitt in a higher strain, and his praises evoked repeated salutes from the ruling spirit:—

"Of that ex-minister I would just say that no man admires his splendid talents more than I do. If ever there was a man formed and fitted by nature to benefit his country and to give it lustre, he is such a man. He has no low, little, mean, petty vices. He has too much good taste and talent to set his mind upon ribands, stars, titles and other appendages and idols of rank. He is of a nature not at all suited to be the creature or tool of any Court. But while I say of him no more than his character and great talents deserve, I must tell him how grossly he has misapplied them in the politics of this country; I must tell him how he has augmented our national debt, and of the lives he has lost in this war. I must tell him he has done more against the privileges of the people, increased more the power of the Crown, and injured more the constitution of his country than any minister I can mention."[1]

The pendant to this speech was that of December 8 on the Army Estimates for the ensuing year. It attracted great attention, was described as "one of the most elegant, argumentative, vigorous and impressive speeches ever made in Parliament," and was printed in separate form.[2] It was to hear this speech that Sheridan's wife dressed up as a man. Take it

[1] Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 405—413. Sheridan said at the opening that he "hardly expected a single vote . . . beyond that little circle of a constitutional party who have for the last ten years been the objects of so much unqualified abuse." For the quotation, cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 100.

[2] "For Stockdale, Piccadilly, Price sixpence, or per Hundred, One Guinea and a half." There was a "new edition" in 1803, and a Birmingham one in 1802. The speech, as given in his Speeches, Vol. III., p. 417, omits one or two salient passages.

all in all, in spirit, in statesmanship, in vivid invective, it is one of the best that he ever delivered. And if Sheridan at this period indulged in freer libations than for some time before or afterwards, they certainly did not quench his fire or dull his brain.

The Peace of Amiens fast crumbled away; France had attacked Switzerland, and it was clear that the First Consul would soon make occasion to burst through a false and flimsy stopgap. Addington at least endeavoured to prepare for the event, and with Addington, Sheridan was in accord. From Fox, twice named in this speech with attached and almost passionate respect, he differed. He besought the House to rise above party and not to squander time in factious disputes as to which minister could best save the nation.[1] With all his might he pressed on his countrymen the stupendous menace of the universal invader.

There had been discord in the Cabinet. The ministers rowed different ways, but they acted not like men in a boat at sea, but like men in the boat of a balloon. Up ascended the ex-Secretary of War [Windham] to the clouds, while Mr. Dundas was opening the valves and letting out the gas to descend. While the one was throwing out ballast and mounting up to the most chivalrous heights, the other was attempting to drop his anchor on a West Indian island. But persiflage did not long keep Sheridan from the gravity of the juncture.

"Sir," he argued, replying to such as discriminated between degrees of danger, "Sir, if I see a purposed contempt of the independence of a nation, a perfidious disregard of the faith of treaties; if I see a Power withdraw her assistance only to return and entrap a country of free men with greater certainty, why, then I say, there has been a change, and a great change too, and I say that such a Power we ought to watch." He would not invent grounds for war; so far he was with Fox. "If a war spirit be springing up in this country, if a chivalrous position be observable, if a sentiment of indignation be rising

[1] This was a favourite theme in several of his earlier speeches on the French Revolution. He always contended that the country must save itself by a national spirit.

upon the subject of the treatment of Switzerland, I for one shall contend that the treatment of Switzerland is no cause for war. . . . I repeat, therefore, peace if possible. But I add, resistance, prompt, resolute, determined resistance, to the first aggression, be the consequences what they may." Fox held otherwise; the emergency had not arisen, it had been argued that preparation could wait:—

"When the army is upon your shores, when the trumpet of the enemy sounds at your gates, then it is time to be prepared." But some had said, Discard armaments altogether. "Sir, when every house in my neighbourhood has been attacked and robbed by a gang of ruffians, how my having no arms is to save me from a visit, I must leave the honourable gentleman to explain." But, again, it was urged that it was unreasonable to presume a purpose on the part of France to meddle with England.

"Look at the map of Europe—there, where a great man [Burke] (who, however, was always wrong on this subject) said he looked for France, and found nothing but a chasm. Look at that map now, and we see nothing but France. It is in our power to measure her territory, to reckon her population, but it is scarcely within the grasp of any man's mind to measure the ambition of Bonaparte. Why, when all Europe has bowed down to him—when he has subdued the whole continent,—why he should feel such great respect for us, I am at a loss to discover." The Bourbons were ambitious, but they had the attachment of tradition and were not constrained to feed their subjects with plunder. With Bonaparte there was "a physical necessity" to prolong "this barter." "Russia, if not in his power, is at least in his influence,—Prussia is at his beck,—Italy is his vassal,—Holland is in his grasp,—Spain at his nod,—Turkey in his toils,—Portugal at his foot. When I see this, can I hesitate . . . in giving a vote that shall put us upon our guard against the machinations and workings of such ambition?" And if it were urged that commercial rivalry is his objective, it would not seem to form part of his plan. He wants Louisiana, and the ports of San Domingo for trade: *we* might have to cede all our commerce without a stroke. "An

ignorant observer may see two armies, and may say there is no war because there is no battle. Yet one of them may make such movements as to compel the other to surrender without striking a blow":—

"No, sir, instead of putting his nation apprentice to commerce, he has other ideas in his head. My humble apprehension is, that though in the tablet and volume of his mind there may be some marginal note about cashiering the King of Etruria, yet that the whole text is occupied with the destruction of this country. This is the first vision that breaks upon him through the gleam of the morning: this is his last prayer at night, to whatever deity he addresses it, whether to Jupiter or Mahomet, to the goddess of battles or the goddess of reason." "But then he is a great philosopher and philanthropist; he proclaims that 'we all belong to the Western family.' . . . To this family I do not wish to belong. . . . He may toss a sceptre to the King of Etruria to play with, and keep a rod to scourge him in the corner. He may have thought at first his Cisalpine republic a fine growing child, and may have found it a rickety bantling. . . . Let us speak the truth. . . . Let us be visiting acquaintance, but I do implore him not to consider us as one of the family."

Pitt, they cried, was the only saviour. Sheridan's comment deserves to be remembered:—

"No single man can save the country. If a nation depends only upon one man, it cannot, and, I will add, does not deserve to, be saved. It can only be done by the parliament and the people. Sir, I say therefore that I cannot believe that there is a back and a fore door to this Egerian grotto. We have all heard, I daresay, of a classical exhibition in this town, *The Invisible Girl*. Here, however, I hope, we shall have no whispering backwards and forwards, no speaking through tubes, no invisible agency."

When the Lille negotiation had fallen through, when Lord Grenville had penned his ambiguous letter, and each minister was allowed to "nibble at" fresh descents upon French coasts or a new sugar-island, the people took "a deep and settled

disgust"; yet now, after three years, "the mouths of the people are shut and gagged." And then he turned to Fox:—

"I shall proceed no further. I perfectly agree with my right honourable friend that war ought to be avoided, though he does not agree with me as to the means best calculated to produce that effect. From any opinion he may express I never differ but with the greatest reluctance. For him my affection, my esteem, and my attachment are unbounded, and they will end only with my life. But I think an important lesson is to be learned from the arrogance of Bonaparte. He says he is an instrument in the hands of Providence—an envoy of God . . . to restore happiness to Switzerland, and to elevate Italy to splendour. . . . Sir, I think he is an instrument in the hands of Providence to make the English love their Constitution the better, to cling to it with more fondness, to hang round it with truer tenderness. Every man feels, when he returns from France [and Fox had there parleyed with Napoleon], that he is coming from a dungeon to enjoy the light and life of British independence. . . . I believe too that he is an instrument . . . to make us more liberal in our political differences, and to render us determined with one hand and heart to oppose any aggression that may be made upon us. If that aggression be made, my friend will, I am sure, agree . . . that we ought to meet it with a spirit worthy of these islands; that we ought to meet it with a conviction of the truth of this assertion, that the country which has achieved such greatness has no retreat in littleness; that if we could be content to abandon everything, we should find no safety in poverty, no security in abject submission; finally, sir, that we ought to meet it with a fixed determination to perish in the same grave with the honour and independence of the country."

Such are a few fragments of this famous speech, and posterity can judge between Sheridan and Fox, who, after hearing it, had the taste and the heart to write thus to his nephew: "Sheridan made a foolish speech, if a speech full of wit can be with propriety so called, upon the Army Estimates, of which all who wish him ill are as fond as I, who wish him well, am

vexed at it. He will, however, I do not doubt, be still right in the end."[1] Looking back now on the impending conflict, we can perceive that Sheridan was right and Fox mistaken, yet it is not the error that calls for blame, but the veiled pride and selfishness that held any divergence from its own obstinacy "foolish."

These are the two great speeches of this period. Sheridan made many others in the same strain, and more than once he had to defend the renewed claims for pecuniary aid which the importunate Prince still presented. In one of them he urged a telling appeal to the national sense of proportion which should rule the status of an heir-apparent, periodically called upon to perform the social functions of the Crown. It had been objected (and this, too, was Fox's opinion)—Let all state perish: well, then,

"Let the Speaker's chair be removed, let the other badges be stripped off, let that bauble, the mace, be taken away, let the fine house that was building him, where he hoped he would soon entertain the members with his accustomed hospitality, . . . be demolished. Let the State coach be laid down, and instead of proceeding in it to St. James's, attended by a grand procession of members in their private coaches, let him go on foot with the addresses, covered with a warm surtout, and honoured with the privilege of an umbrella in case of rain. Let the judges be conducted by no sheriffs, or sheriffs' attendants, to the assize town; let the Chief Justice go down in the mail-coach, and the Puisne Judges content themselves with travelling as outside passengers. Let the Lord Mayor, instead of coming to Westminster in the State barge, . . . let him come in a plain wherry without any attendants, and instead of going back to feast on turtle at Guildhall with the great officers of State and foreign ambassadors, let him content himself with stopping on his way back, and taking a beef-steak at Dolly's chop-house."[2]

[1] Fox's Corr., Vol. III., p. 206.
[2] Speeches, Vol. III., p. 438 (March 4, 1803).

Nor here should be omitted some notice of the two trenchant letters written to please Lady Bessborough from the House of Commons, and included in the new letters at the end of this volume. Dealing with debates between 1801 and 1803, they exhibit Sheridan's power of presentation, and his generous estimate of those who depreciated himself. In the first of them he tears himself away for five minutes from listening to Fox, a thing which he tells her he would do "for no one breathing" but her. "He has spoken," he proceeds, "not only wonderfully well, but with the greatest possible dexterity, prudence, management, etc., qualities he has not always at command. He began by putting the House in the best possible humour with him, joking about the *temporary cessation of hostilities* from Pitt's friends, Canning and such like; and he has gone on conciliating the House more and more, taking the most judicious line, too, in abusing Bonaparte and his government and his 'Acts.' . . . It has been hitherto a dry, dull debate, not worth detailing to you. Canning's speech had nothing, I think, good in it, even in declamation, not even lively, which he generally is. Tom Grenville spoke tolerably well, but not very—on the whole a sensible dull speech. He made rather an odd avowal in one part of it, that he saw nothing objectionable in the amendment. This raised a great cry of 'Hear, hear,' as you may imagine, on our part." The second letter, scribbled "half seas over," extols Grey to the skies, and the more so as he had succeeded a great speech—"one of the most brilliant pieces of declamation that ever fell from that rascal Pitt's lips. Detesting the dog as I do, I cannot withhold this just tribute to the scoundrel's talents. I could not help often lamenting in the course of his harangue, as I have frequently done before, what a pity it is that he has not a particle of honesty in him." Lord Hawkesbury had opened calmly and sensibly, though neither with taste nor brilliance. "Erskine followed, agreeing and disagreeing, contradicting and confusing himself, alternately entertaining and tiring and disgusting the House. . . . Pitt raised the war-whoop most vehemently and eloquently—and the cry was loud. He took

very sly opportunities, as you may imagine, of ridiculing poor Tom Erskine, whose nonsensical contradictions he treated with a degree of scorn and contempt that was probably not quite so palatable to the learned counsel, as they were relished by the House. . . ."[1]

In May, 1804, Addington went out and Pitt returned for the last time to sway the destinies of England. His broken health and the fatalities that closed the following year—the year of Nelson's immortality—sounded his knell. He had never recovered the degradation of Dundas. Ulm and Austerlitz dealt the final blow, and he died in January, 1806, with the "Austerlitz" look on his careworn countenance.

> "As some proud column, though alone,
> Thy strength had propped the tottering throne.
> Now is the stately column broke,
> The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
> The trumpet's silver sound is still,
> The warder silent on the hill."

After that disaster Sheridan, who had pelted the minister with rattling volleys against his Additional Forces Bill,[2] paid a noble tribute to his memory, on the day which saw its repeal. "As for me," he said, "there were many who flattered him more than I, and some who feared him more, but there was no man who had a higher respect for his transcendent talents, his matchless eloquence, and the greatness of his mind. I may have considered that there was too much of loftiness in his mind which could not bend to advice, or scarcely bear co-operation; I might have considered that as a Statesman his measures were not adequate to the situation of the country in the present times; but I always thought his purpose and his

[1] Cf. App. (4) (o) 1 and 2.

[2] Especially in the great speech of March 6, 1805, where he said that nothing had struck Talleyrand more than that "this banking, luxurious, mercantile people were not contented with lolling on the couch of indolence, or with putting their hands in their pockets, but trusted to their own energy and spirit." Cf. Hansard, III., 723; Speeches, Vol. III., p. 477. A preceding one of June 18, 1804 (*ibid.*, p. 469), is also powerful.

hope were for the greatness and security of the Empire. Let not his friends, then, suppose they are dealing fairly with this House in representing that we seek a triumph over the memory of that illustrious man when we now move the repeal of a measure which he would himself have repealed if he had lived. A right honourable gentleman (Wilberforce) who had many opportunities of knowing his intentions has told you that he intended to repeal it if it failed in getting men. It has failed. Let the failure of the measure be buried in his grave, and never remembered in his epitaph."[1] Nothing can exceed the grace and dignity of this homage from a lifelong antagonist. But in one of his speeches during the March of the preceding year Sheridan had made even Pitt blanch by taunting him with his treachery to the Catholics. This was the time when it was said that Pitt glared and turned pale. "The right honourable gentleman," said Sheridan, "retired from office, because, as was stated, he could not carry an important question which he deemed necessary to—the just claims of the Catholics; and in going out he did not hesitate to tear off the sacred veil of majesty, describing his Sovereign as the only person that stood in the way of this desirable object. After the right honourable gentleman's retirement, he advised the Catholics to look to no one but him for the attainment of their rights, and cautiously to abstain from forming a connection with any other person. But how does it appear now that the right honourable gentleman is returned to office? He declines to perform his promise, and has received, as his colleagues in office, those who are pledged to resist the measure—they feel that he comes back to office with a character degraded by the violation of a solemn pledge given to a great and respectable body of the people upon a particular and momentous occasion! Does the right honourable gentleman imagine either that he returns to office with the same character for political wisdom,

[1] Speeches, Vol. III., p. 504. It will be remembered that Fox opposed a public monument to Pitt. He did not recognise the test, applied by Gladstone to Disraeli, that a statesman who had unquestionably borne a great part in great transactions, deserves this honour.

after the description which he gave of the talents and capacity of his predecessors, and after having shown by his own actions that his description was totally unfounded?"

Nor did he fail to point out Pitt's maltreatment of Addington and that deputy's henchmen. "I approved," he said, "of their measures, and I thought besides that their continuance in office was a security against the right honourable gentleman's return to power, which I always considered as the greatest national calamity. If, indeed, I had, like him, recommended Mr. Addington to His Majesty and the public, as the fittest person to fill his high station, because it was a convenient step to my own safety, in retiring from a station which I had so grossly abused, and which I could no longer fill with honour and security; if, having done it from such unwarrantable motives, I should have tapered off by degrees from a promised support, when I saw the minister of my own choice was acquiring a greater stability and popularity than I wished for; and if, when I saw an opening to my own return to power at a safer period than when I had left it, I had entered into a combination with others, whom I meant also to betray, from the sole lust of power and office, in order to remove him; and if, under the dominion of these base appetites, I had then treated with ridicule and contempt the very man whom I had before held up to the choice of my Sovereign and the approbation of this House and the public, I should indeed have deserved the contempt of all sound politicians, and the execration of every honest private man. I should indeed have deserved to be told not merely that I was hollow and insincere in my support, but that I was mean, base, and perfidious." [1]

Among Sheridan's notes stand some fine sentences regarding the Catholic problem. He there distinguishes between the King's conscience and those who played on it for personal ends. It had been thought that Pitt might have joined hands with

[1] Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 499, 500. This is the speech on the Additional Forces Bill which contained the story of Garrick and Johnny M'Cree, the Scotchman who was good for neither tragedy nor comedy. Sheridan applied it to the incompetence of the Secretary-at-War.

Fox, that the Prince would then favour Catholic emancipation, and that "a bridge might be found." But Sheridan mistrusted coalitions, and once more he denounced them.

Pitt's death and Lord Hawkesbury's failure to form a Government at length brought Fox and "All the Talents" into power; nor, if Pitt had forsaken the Catholics, were they much better considered by their professed champions. Sheridan, with some indignation at the breach of Fox's long-standing promise to compensate him by Cabinet rank, took the post which had been appointed for him in 1789, the Treasurer-ship of the Navy. Fox was sole Foreign Secretary. Lord Grenville received his reward for abetting him by presiding over the Treasury; Windham, the Foxite and Pittite, came back to the fold as War Secretary. Petty, the heir to Lansdowne, accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; Addington, now Sidmouth, was Privy Seal; Grey, now Lord Howick, supervised the Admiralty. Moira, as Master of Ordnance, together with Sheridan, represented the Prince of Wales. Erskine was Lord Chancellor; Ellenborough, Lord Chief Justice with Cabinet rank. The Rockinghamite Lord Fitzwilliam presided over the Council, while Lord Spencer was Home Secretary. Never was there an administration more miscellaneous. Of Pitt's legatees—who were finally to engross the whole political reversion—only Canning, Castlereagh, and the non-official Wilberforce were absent. Every prominent Foxite, except the amphibious Tierney, found posts or influence. Addington's control over his tribe of parasites was recognised, and the Lansdowne element, too, had been considered. Yet this coalition of coalitions proved ill-starred and ephemeral, only lasting from January 26 to March 25 of the succeeding year. Meanwhile, on September 13, 1806, Charles Fox completed the death-roll of distinction, and consigned the immediate future to the sway of great measures and little men.

One of Sheridan's motives for clinging to opposition was that office tempted him to extravagance. A document remains among his papers which shows how he was living before he

took up his official quarters. It is the receipt for his house-tax—he inhabited George Street—and on it stands the collector's demand for arrears, with Sheridan's characteristic comment, "Answer civilly." Forty windows, five male servants, two four-wheel carriages, five superior, and ten "husbandry" and "Doss" horses, "armorial bearings" and "hair powder" for three, make up an amount of taxation (£125 10*s.* 9*d.*) which in this year of grace 1806 exceeded the house-rent by nearly three pounds. Nor was Sheridan's lavishness restricted to the needs of his establishment. Fancying Fox to be firmly seated, he immediately launched out into expense. Not only did he refurnish his official dwelling with extravagance, but he gratified pride and anticipated revenue by restoring a large and unnecessary sum to the renters of Drury Lane, while he gave a magnificent reception to the Prince and the party in honour of his grandchild's christening.[1]

All his conjugal breezes were now allayed, and he ceased his piteous petitions that his wife should never leave or neglect him. He laboured to put his affairs in order, called in his friends Graham and Hosier to reorganise them, and took a fit of exemplary temperance. But embarrassed he remained.

In 1805 the Prince had conferred on him the Receivership of the Duchy of Cornwall, a post that in good years brought in an income of over £900. But, as was noticed at this book's outset, the original letters prove that for years its benefit

[1] Cf. (*inter alia*) Eg. MS. 1975, ff. 149d., 160, 167 (newspaper cuttings). The *fête* was given for the double event of the christening both of Tom's child and that of Mr. Henry Scott. The sponsors of the former were Lord Moira, Lady Westmoreland, and Sheridan himself. It was also a farewell party to Tom Sheridan, who was just starting with Lord Moira for Ireland. Palms and orange trees were the decorations. There were a dance and a concert where Rovedino and Kelly sang. "The delicacies of the table were under the skilful management of Mr. Gunter." For the other matters cf. Sheridan MSS. (his letter of April 20, 1810, to his wife); also a list of repairs at Somerset House, and the distribution of his pictures, including sketches by Gainsborough. According to Creevey, who recounts a fire on the premises, Sheridan kept two cooks; cf. "The Creevey Papers," Vol. I., p. 81.

was deferred, while Sheridan did his utmost to shield the Prince against imputations of insincerity.[1] Indeed, in one of his letters to his wife he tells her on no account to "suspect or decry" the paragon, who "was acting as honourably as man can do," and reposing in Sheridan "his entire and unqualified confidence."[2]

So affairs marched till Fox, soothed by his wife and at peace with the world, made an edifying end in the Chiswick villa of the Cavendishes; in the same year, too, which saw the death of his worshipper, Georgiana the beautiful Duchess. No one felt Fox's loss more than did Sheridan. It was gossiped that the dying statesman declined to see him in his last moments, and, again, that he admitted him, but with reluctance. As a matter of fact, however, Sheridan was charged with the whole pageant of the funeral, and was one of the chief mourners. His dearest wish—a wish ungratified—was that in his turn he might be suffered to rest beside him in Westminster Abbey. There is something pathetic in Sheridan's persistent devotion to Fox, when we read both his and his nephew's side-hits against the detached adherent who still profited the cause. Both in 1799 and in 1803 Sheridan met them and the whole Whig crew at Woburn under the roof of the Duke of Bedford.[3] His letter describing the second visit revels in the affectionate welcome of his old associates. They chatted, played tennis, and

[1] The offer is dated February 20, 1804, on the death of the former Receiver, Lord Elliot. "You well know that I never forget my old friends," it begins, and he signs himself "Ever affectionately yours." It afterwards transpired that Lord Lake had been promised a reversion of the post, and until his death in 1808 Sheridan surrendered the income. Moreover, he could only have been appointed Lake's deputy by the Privy Council, and obstacles were raised. Sheridan's letters of 1808 to the Prince's secretary, MacMahon (including one for transmission to Lake shortly before his death), show that Sheridan's one object was to screen the Prince from a public misconception of faithlessness. Moore has given some of these letters. And cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 111.

[2] Sheridan MSS., cited by Rae, Vol. II., p. 249.

[3] For the 1799 visit cf. the newspaper cuttings in Eg. MS. 1975. Sheridan's long letter to his wife about the later visit has been given by Fraser Rae.

caroused, "in all moderation," as he assures his Hecca. Fitzpatrick, too, was among the guests, nor was it long before death claimed him also: only the sinister Francis—the man who now fawned on the Prince at the Pavilion—was "laughed at." And yet behind Sheridan's back, these loyal friends were already sneering in their sleeves. True, he had tried them sorely and often, nor was it always pleasant to know him, but what he said of them in public he said of them in private. He had not two voices.

The mention of the Pavilion recalls those festive nights when plump "Prinny," reunited to his "only Maria," presided over the revels and prescribed the deportment. The best account of them has been furnished by the fetch-and-carry Creevey, who luxuriated in self-importance. Nor can the bumpers of those banquets have been wholly fatal, for who that has read it can forget the page, worthy of Pepys, that tells how Creevey and Sheridan, a trifle mellow, burst into Mrs. Creevey's bedroom during the small hours and entertained her till daybreak with their witty stories?[1] Mrs. Creevey was a kinswoman of Mrs. Sheridan, and the wife, too, must sometimes have been equally regaled. Francis has bequeathed his own version of the Brighton saturnalia, where he baited the hero of the Warren Hastings trial in a contest of repartee. It is no dignified spectacle—"Prinny" terming Francis "the wise man of the East," Sheridan retorting that this was "*à peu près comme sage femme*," and the caustic malignant cutting him to the quick by nicknaming himself "the man in debt—to Sheridan," while he dubbed him "the man who extends England's credit, or the man of the papers." The Prince remarked that this was "*un peu fort*," said to Sheridan, "Don't mind him, old fellow," and exacted the penalty of a name for himself. "*The* man," was

[1] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 83, under date August 25 (1806): "... They all adjourned to Melbourne House to supper. At two o'clock in the morning that terrible Sheridan seduced Mr. Creevey into Brooks's, where they stayed till four, when Sherry *affectionately* came home with him, and upstairs to see me. They were both so very merry and so much pleased with each other's jokes, that though they could not repeat them to me very distinctly, I was too much amused to scold them as they deserved."

the renegade's answer, but he got no further.[1] Let us hope that he rolled under the table.

Fox's death, so closely succeeding Pitt's, not only transformed the relations of his party (since henceforward Grey, leagued with Grenville, practically broke with Sheridan), but it may also be said to have effaced the eighteenth-century landmarks. With it the aftermath, the age of Epigoni, begins. And all England felt that a new order was in train. Another great spirit had vanished, and Scott linked his requiem to Pitt's :—

"Mourn genius high, and lore profound,
And wit that loved to play, not wound,
And all the reasoning power divine
To penetrate, resolve, combine.
* * *
If ever from an English heart,
O *here* let prejudice depart,
And, partial feeling cast aside,
Record that Fox a Briton died.
* * *
Drop upon Fox's grave the tear,
'Twill trickle to his rival's bier.
* * *
The solemn echo seems to cry,
'Here let their discord with them die.'
Speak not for those a separate doom,
Whom Fate made brothers in the tomb,
But search the land of living men,
Where wilt thou find their like again?"

Sheridan spoke little while he held office. His main efforts were an appeal on the motion of thanks to the Volunteers and a stirring speech on the slave trade, the repeal of which he had advocated since 1787. It was in 1807 that he ended by quoting the lines :—

"I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To fan me when I sleep and tremble when
I wake, for all that human sinews, bought
And sold, have ever earned."[2]

[1] Cf. Fitzgerald's "Lives of the Sheridans," Vol. II., p. 82; the source is evidently Francis's "Memoirs."

[2] Cf. Speeches, Vol. III., p. 513. Among his notes are some fragments apparently intended for this speech.

When Fox died his ambition had been to replace him as Member for Westminster, and after a fierce contest he succeeded, with Sir Samuel Hood for his colleague. But Stafford never quite forgave this desertion, nor did that fight, with all its dust and sparring, resemble the signal combat of more than twenty years earlier. Filibusters abounded, but somehow the gloss had worn off from those tearing, roystering times, and a day less picturesque was dully creeping in.

The dissolution at the close of 1806 brought back thinned ranks for the Ministerialists, and the King only waited opportunity to end a combination so distasteful. Compared with the dictatorship of Grey and Grenville, Fox had been almost welcome, and now to Grenville and to Grey both King and Prince were exposed: it was an ominous conjunction—one of ice and fire—and it was known that the calculation of the one and the violence of the other would soon bring the Catholic question to a head. Fox had pledged himself to the Prince not to disturb his royal father by raising the ghost of Emancipation. The Prince himself has described how these assurances were renewed after his death, and by what cabals and high-handed persistence they were broken.[1] The Catholics, however, were betrayed once more, and the mountain of promise only brought forth a mouse, though that mouse sufficed to chase the administration out. The old measure for enabling Catholic promotions was revived, but the moment chosen hardly favoured a step for which Grey was chiefly responsible. In March the ministry was wrecked. Sheridan's *mot* on this occasion is familiar. He had often heard, he said, of people knocking out their brains against a wall, but he never before knew of anyone building a wall expressly for the purpose. Less familiar, however, are the verses which were then circulated against him:—

"'I've heard very often,' shrewd Sheridan said,
'Of a man who against a stone wall ran his head,
But my friends had no wall, so with wonderful pains
They built one on purpose to beat out their brains.'

[1] Cf. the Croker Papers, Vol. I., pp. 297—300.

No, no, Master Sherry, though pleasant thy wit,
For once it has failed the true matter to hit;
For men who thus wantonly build up a wall,
Have convinced the whole world they have no brains at all."[1]

But Sheridan did not only jest at the withdrawal of the Bill. He wrote a letter to the Prince on the whole transaction,[2] and in Parliament he took a statesmanlike view of its impolicy. "I think," he said in August, 1807, "they began at the wrong end. They should have commenced the measure of redress to Ireland at the cottage instead of at the park and the mansion. To have gone first to the higher orders of the Catholics, to have sought to make them judges, peers and commoners, I do not know that such a proceeding, had it taken place, would not rather have served to aggravate discontent, as it might have been construed into a design to divide the interests of the Catholics. Sure I am that with a view to serve or to conciliate the Catholic population, I mean the poor, the peasantry, its effect would be nothing. It would be like dressing or decorating the topmasts of a ship when there were ten feet of water in the hold, or putting a laced hat on a man who had not a shoe to his foot. *The place to set out to in Ireland for the relief of the people is the cottage. . . .* "[3] The whole Catholic question was really dear to his heart, and it will be found that it underlay his final downfall.

The result of the dissolution was disastrous to Sheridan. Partly through Grenvillite selfishness, he found himself worsted at Westminster by Sir F. Burdett, in league with the tailor-demagogue Paull, aided by Cobbett and Horne Tooke. He took refuge in Ilchester, a borough found for him by Lord Grenville.[4]

[1] Cf. Colonel Disbrowe's papers on "Stirring Times," edited by Mr. Montgomery Campbell (1908).

[2] Moore said that while Fox was alive Sheridan had also penned a letter for the Prince to the King, but this the Prince denied; cf. Croker Papers, Vol. I., p. 296.

[3] Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 533, 534 ("State of Ireland," August 13, 1807). For his letter to the Prince (which does not survive) cf. Moore's "Journal," Vol. IV., p. 301.

In the Sheridan MSS. and the Holland House MSS. are letters, speeches and notes respecting both of Sheridan's Westminster Elections. Lord

Throughout their short reign, "All the Talents" had been mercilessly quizzed in the *Anti-Jacobin* and the *All the Talents Garland*. The following lines from the latter were directed against Sheridan in a rhymed letter to Grey (Lord Howick), the supposed recipient of his woes:—

"Alas! I cannot write or speak,
The tears run *hissing* down my cheek,
My burning bosom vomits sighs
Like fumes which from Vesuvius rise.
Boiled by the flames of face and nose,
My brain a melted lava grows;
And like two meteors in the skies,
When Northern lights disastrous rise,
Glare in their fiery sphere mine eyes.
Howick, as I'm an honest man,
It was thy inconsiderate plan
Which kindled this destructive fire
And filled me with combustious ire.
*  *  *  *
Have I not cause to deprecate
Measures which brought me to this state,
Which left me loafless, fishless—worse,
Left scarce a guinea in my purse,
Left all my duns, a clamorous throng,
Hopeless—who lived on hope so long;
And left that little humbug Paull
To sneer and glory at my fall?
What shall I do? My cash is gone,
And credit I—alas!—have none.
My wits may furnish me again
With Burgundy and rich Champagne,
But driven out of Place and Court,
Ah! where shall *Sherry* look for *Port?*"

But his political misfortunes did not end here. On March 25, 1807, the presidency of the Duke of Portland again sheltered a ministry in tatters. Spencer Perceval, the financial barrister

Grenville (who afterwards owned that he had made a mistake) wished to reserve all his influence for Lord Percy, and a letter of remonstrance to Grenville about his (Sheridan's) exclusion from the second election conflict remains among his papers. A petition was set on foot to displace the members, and Sheridan twice spoke on it in the House of Commons. Nowhere did Sheridan honour Fox more than in his Westminster Election speeches.

who converted the three per cents. into terminable annuities and made banknotes legal tender, was his Chancellor of the Exchequer, and on the Duke's death in October, 1809, eventually replaced him at the helm. But meanwhile, in 1808, another general election occurred. Sheridan, exiled from Stafford, ill at ease in the Grenvillite Ilchester, was nominated as "the great Sheridan" by the independents of Wexford. Ireland was eager to do him honour. Even in his personal absence, however, his evil star seemed to blight a prospect which outwardly seemed fair. His enthusiastic colleague, Mr. Colclough, was rapidly absorbing every vote under the magic of his name, when their opponent, Mr. Alcock, complained that supporters had been enticed from his side, challenged Colclough to mortal combat, and, in the presence of eleven justices of the peace who raised neither voice nor hand, shot him through the heart.[1]

Member for Ilchester Sheridan remained, and though he dispatched his son to Stafford as his substitute, and himself, at the last, courted its suffrages, here too adversity pursued him. He would gladly have represented an Irish constituency, and the Irish question came daily into prominence. In 1807 he spoke twice on Ireland, in March on the Irish Arms Bill, in August on the state of Ireland. This was a great oration, and his nomination for Wexford may have been an acknowledgment of his services to the cause which he called "that of justice and my country." Rebellion and coercion stalked abroad, and Sheridan rightly complained that governments went on "legislating for Ireland in the dark,"—rejecting light and information upon a subject to which they were called upon to apply the law, and that law, too, most penal and severe in its character."[2] They repressed disorder before they had ascertained its nature or its remedies. He pointed out the many symptoms of Irish loyalty; he pointed out also

[1] Cf. Barrington's "Sketches" (1827), Vol. I., pp. 298—309.

[2] These sentences appear in Hansard, but are missing from the published report.

that the so-called "French party" in Ireland was one "of family connection abstracted from all political views":—

"Since the days of Elizabeth, from the very commencement of those foul and tyrannous measures which originated in national jealousy, political prejudice, or religious dissension, but particularly the latter, which drove Catholics of high spirit from their native country, numbers of such exiles (his own family had ranked among them) found an asylum in France, and hence a correspondence between them and their relations in Ireland which naturally led to the creation of a French party in Ireland, and an Irish party in France."

But there was likewise a Danish party, and Irish exiles had found asylum in America. Would the contingency of a war with Denmark or America be any reason for suspending the Irish Constitution? "Let us," he said, "diminish and not aggravate the cause of this exile and emigration."[1] The real basis of discontent was never examined; a total ignorance of actual circumstances prevailed:—

"The fact is that the tyranny practised upon the Irish has been throughout unremitting. There has been no change but in the manner of inflicting it. They have had nothing but variety in oppression extending to all ranks and degrees of a certain description of the people. If you would know what this varied oppression consisted in, I would refer you to the penal statutes you have repealed, and to some of those which you have not. There you will see the high and the low equally subjected to the lash of persecution, and still some affect to be astonished at the discontents of the Irish." He illustrated his grave meaning by a ludicrous story. An Irish drummer was employed to punish a soldier. "When the boy struck high, the poor soldier exclaimed, 'Lower, bless you,' with which the boy complied. But soon after, the soldier exclaimed, 'Higher, if you please,' and again he called out, 'A little lower,' upon which the accommodating boy addressed him—'Now, upon my conscience, I see you are a discontented man, for, strike where I may, there is no pleasing you.'"

[1] This again appears in Hansard alone.

Promises to Ireland, Sheridan resumed, were like the parent's promises to a child. An armed people is much more peaceable than one unarmed and defenceless.[1] The troops in Ireland, he urged, should be placed there as mouthpieces and protectors of the people, not "to act as executioners, but as a guard of honour." The prerogative of the Crown should prove a sufficient appeal to loyalty without Bills, which were only "martial law in masquerade." The abominable cry of "No Popery" had been revived, although Catholics had been urged to look for satisfaction to the promoters of the Union. And Ireland required subsidies, the subsidies which had been lavished on Prussia :—

"Why do you not subsidise Ireland? And all the subsidy I would ask for her is your confidence, affection and justice to her people. These I call on you to grant before it is too late. . . . The first character of courage is to look at danger with a fearless eye, and the next to combat it with a dauntless heart. If with this resolution we front our dangers, history will do justice to our feelings and our character, whatever may be the exertions or success of the formidable tyrant who would destroy us, or of those who succeed to his power and his views. . . . If faithful to ourselves, if united, we shall, in these two little islands, to which, as to an altar, freedom has flown for refuge, be able to fight with all the valorous fury of men defending a sanctuary. . . . Let Liberty bloom in all her beauty where exists a soil in which she is capable of flourishing. . . . If you want the attachment of the Irish, begin by giving them some reason to love you. But the other way to deprive them of their constitution in the meantime was

"'Propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.'[2]

"You ask Ireland for bravery, and take away the motives it; for loyalty, and deprive them of the benefits of the Constitution. By the hapless Bill proposed but defeated, at least a Catholic officer might have been enabled to make a career, and

[1] Contained in Hansard alone.

[2] "For sake of life to lose what makes life dear."

need no longer rise to his own degradation. Charles the First had asked Selden what was the best way to put down rebellion; to which Selden answered, 'Remove the cause.' Remove the cause of disaffection in Ireland, and disaffection would end."[1]

These feelings marked his political outlook to the close. Politically, he became wider, firmer, more generous as he grew older. But privately, though ever genial and brilliant, still welcomed, too, by the flower of society, he already began to sink, while the fickleness of his Prince added to that loss of foothold which weakened his character. Was it for this that he had so long and often withstood strong political temptations, that even now his sympathies were to bar him from success? Had sturdy pride no power to keep him from dark solitude, crapulous cabals, and dingy corners? The despair of his gradual decline resembles the last flicker of an expiring lamp.

[1] Speech of August 13, 1807, Speeches, Vol. III., pp. 522—543. This is the speech which contains the florid passage against Napoleon; cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 15. Hansard's report comprises an addition to this outburst:—"I should ask you to look at your statute book and to study the means of conciliating the alliance of your own subjects, while Bonaparte is grasping the nations, and while he is surrounding France not with that iron frontier for which the unwise and childish ambition of Louis XIV. was so eager, but with the kingdoms of his own creation, securing the gratitude of higher minds as the hostage, and the fears of others as pledges for his safety." On July 15, Sheridan had also spoken in favour of a grant for Maynooth College.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

(February, 1809—June, 1812)

> "I've seen the day, with my good, biting falchion
> I could have made them skip. I am old now,
> And these vile crosses spoil me; out of breath,
> Fie, oh! quite out of breath and spent."
>
> SHAKESPEARE, "*King Lear*."

SHERIDAN flung himself with ardour into championship of the Peninsular War. Again and again, while ministers inclined to starve the campaign, he urged on his countrymen the sheer necessity of fighting to the death. At last, he told them, and for the first time Napoleon faced a patriot people struggling to be free. He was no longer sweeping across divided and despotised nations. Great Britain's mission was to arm the hand of liberty in its death-grapple with a tyrant. Nor did he insist less on the Catholic and Irish questions, and on the freedom of the Press. Spain and Ireland are the watchwords of his final phase; one of the last speeches that he was to make expatiated on the blessings of an untrammelled public opinion; the glory of freedom at home and abroad was his last refrain.

But as he grew in statesmanship, he became more and more excluded from his customary outlets, possessed more and more by the demon of drink. Indeed, exclusion forms the motto of these three dismal years: exclusion from his theatre, exclusion from his party, exclusion eventually from Carlton House, and exclusion from St. Stephen's. Beyond the fatalities of Drury Lane, which first call for notice, and outside his own degeneration, two main causes contributed to Sheridan's ruin: the haughtiness of the high and dry Whigs, whom Grey now hoped to lead in opposition, and the caprices of the Prince, whom his servitor almost worshipped. Undoubtedly Sheridan was not without incentives to outwit the former; doubtless he

was ready to sacrifice everything but his political independence to the latter; nor can either of these very human impulses be deemed sublime. But it will appear that his censors—they of his own household—were insolent, grasping and vindictive. Those young and ardent Whigs of Fox's prime had been hardened into the haggling monopolists of Grenville's market, and Tierney, who had resumed office under Grenville, now reinforced his master in opposition, and aided him by intrigues.[1] Grey—always liberal—had been led by intense ambition to shake hands with Grenville, and the pair now regarded office as their hereditary, almost hallowed, perquisite. They had been rude and high-handed ever since Fox's death, and Sheridan and Lord Moira were made to feel that since the Prince had ceased to be "a party man," the Whig chieftains held themselves haughtily aloof.[2] They now only awaited the speedy rout of Perceval's ill-assorted legions. As for the Prince, he suspected most of those who surrounded him, persecuted his wife, bullied his daughter, made friends with his time-serving mother and pined for emancipation from the pupilage boded by a return to power of those hectoring Whigs. The documents written for and by the Prince during the successive machinations of 1810 to 1812, and the counter-manifestoes issued by the Whig leaders, air all the pretentious and pretended jargon of personal attachment and constitutional duty, but their real meaning was, on the one hand, the stern dictation of the great families; on the other, the sly resentment of a princeling eager to prove himself a king. The precipitous places down which Sheridan slipped were slimed with royal and official hypocrisy.

On the evening of February 24, 1809, while he was sitting in his accustomed place in the House, and about to speak on Mr. Ponsonby's motion relative to the war in Spain, a red and

[1] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 137.

[2] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 384. Lord Holland confirms this, and comments on the impolicy of Grey, and Grenville's slight of Sheridan. Cf. "Further Memoirs of the Whig Party," p. 72.

lurid blaze streamed through the windows. It was soon known, with the proverbial haste of ill news, that Drury Lane was on fire. An adjournment was proposed in Sheridan's honour, but he besought the House to waive this mark of sympathy and not to postpone the interests of empire to his private disasters. Calmly he left his place and went to survey the scene. He is said to have looked on the catastrophe undismayed, and even to have exclaimed, "Surely a man may enjoy a glass of wine by his own fireside." But none knew better what ruin was portended. All that he had embarked and re-embarked was lost, for the insurance of his theatre was trifling; and to bankruptcy was added the destruction of relics very dear to him, which had been removed from Somerset Place to be stored. The harpsichord on which St. Cecilia had played turned to ashes with the rest.

Yet, with characteristic optimism, he immediately set himself to retrieve adversity. There may even have been some sense of relief in the chances of readjustment. The enormous excess of the actual cost of rebuilding over the last estimates had precluded the expected defrayal of old liabilities; one hundred and fifty thousand pounds subscribed in 1793 had barely sufficed to liquidate the new expense. A fresh start might prove a blessing; and, besides, there would now be some likelihood of checking the competition which had hitherto damaged a theatre remote from the fashionable quarters of the town, and antiquated in times of performance that trenched on the new dinner-hour. Covent Garden Theatre owned a "dormant" as well as an actual patent. It was proposed that this patent should be revived so that united interests might be enabled to obviate rival performances.[1]

[1] Sheridan had opposed the patent for another new theatre in the House of Commons—on March 25 and May 9, 1811. The latter speech was very eloquent. His paper about this regulated theatre survives (Sheridan MSS., and cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 377). At the end he writes, "'Fore Heavens the plan's a good plan! I shall add a little epilogue to-morrow. R. B. S.

'Tis now too late, and I've a letter to write
Before I go to bed—and then, good-night."

Under these circumstances he wrote to a trustee of his marriage settlement, one long friendly with him, and linked, moreover, by marriage, both with Grey and with Sheridan's own wife. Samuel Whitbread, the inheritor of that brewery which had once been Thrale's, had long been a leading figure of Opposition. In 1805 he had led the attack on Dundas (then Lord Melville) which conduced to his impeachment (of which Sheridan had been a manager),[1] and eventually to his virtual acquittal. But the blow to Pitt had been serious, and it placed Whitbread in the forefront of the Foxite group. Enthusiastic, yet cool and clear-sighted, he was a man on whom none could impose, though his hard head balanced a soft heart. But as time went on the enthusiasm predominated. He took a vehement course in the Regency events which soon rekindled passions that had slumbered for nigh a quarter of a century. Later still, he as violently espoused the cause of the Princess Caroline, and of the daughter, whom her father denominated "a firebrand." His calm exterior belied his headstrong nature, which eventually disturbed his brain, till, in 1815, he died by his own hand.[2] Sheridan's letter of deep regret on that occasion is among his papers; but for three years earlier, developments which neither of them could really control infuriated the despairing sentimentalist against the man of facts and figures. Sheridan always skips details when he generalises over finance or misfortunes, and he now attributed both to arrangements which had in truth little to do with them. But Whitbread, too, erred on the side of that considered caution which leaves the improvident to starve while philanthropists pursue their inquiries.

This, however, belongs to the future. At present Sheridan

His confidential intermediary in many of these theatrical arrangements was Henry Burgess of Curzon Street, solicitor and political go-between.

[1] Cf. "The Trial, etc., of Henry, Lord Viscount Melville, etc. Before the House of Peers in Westminster Hall, between the 29th of April and the 17th of May, 1806. London. Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1806."

[2] Brougham said that though Whitbread was good at administration, for counsel he had "no head"; cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 181.

besought Whitbread as friend, politician and man of business to form a committee to re-build, re-cast and re-finance Drury Lane. Whitbread acceded to his request with zeal. Lord Holland, Douglas Kinnaird and others put matters in train; the committee, which Byron eventually joined, was powerful; some of the money was soon found; the old actors, who petitioned Sheridan for redress in language justifying some of his keen sarcasms on the paper, were propitiated; a scheme was set on foot, and plans for a fireproof structure, prepared. It was believed that the old lessons of 1793 would not be lost, that estimates could be kept within bounds, and that the new building, of which Wyatt was architect, would not be too big for practical requirements. The first stone was laid in October, 1811; the theatre was opened in the same month of the following year, and one of its early productions was an adaptation of "Nourjahad," the Arabian tale which Sheridan's mother had composed while he was a boy at Harrow. The keen competition for a prologue to inaugurate the ceremony produced the undying satire of the "Rejected Addresses." Charles Sheridan tried for it; William Linley tried for it,[1] even Whitbread tried for it, and of his poem, which, like most of them, descanted on the Phœnix, Sheridan said in Moore's hearing that it was the work of a rhapsodising poulterer. Byron, who had scorned to enter the lists, volunteered the poem which was eventually recited and which originally contained the line, "When Garrick died, and Brinsley ceased to write." The young poet, who does not seem to have met and been charmed by Sheridan till he dined with him at Rogers's in June, 1813, was thus thrown with the veteran wit, and spent many a jocund evening in his company. Thirty years divided them, but none could better understand Sheridan than Byron. He felt for and with him; he understood his political surroundings. He admired his powers, and had early apostrophised him in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." He was intimate with the children of his oldest friends. He now constantly saw him at Devonshire or Holland Houses, in the

[1] Cf. Add. MS. 27900, where the really rejected addresses are given.

snug breakfast-room of Samuel Rogers, or at William Lamb's, whose young and wilful wife was the "Caro" Ponsonby whom Sheridan had petted in the Bessborough nursery.

By the close of 1811 the proposals under which Sheridan was to part with his half-interest in Drury Lane were such as fully contented him. He was to receive twenty-four thousand pounds, out of which the Linleys and other claimants were to be reimbursed. A further sum of four thousand was to be paid for the property of the Fruit Offices, and the reversion of boxes and old shares; while Tom Sheridan, for his quarter of the patent, was to get no less than twelve thousand pounds.[1] Sheridan never doubted that his co-operation would be retained even if no official post could be allotted. His long services, proved tact, and general skill would, he made sure, prove indispensable. He brimmed over with gratitude to the kind, the able, the infallible Whitbread. Barely a year, however, sufficed to convert his thankfulness into indignation. And even now, in 1809, he waxed wrathful over other matters. In July Lord Grenville was installed Chancellor of Oxford, and it was thought right that Sheridan should attend with other personages to receive an honorary degree. The notion met with general approval, but at the last moment "three churlish *non-placets* of Corpus," as a lampoon styled the dissentient masters, opposed the resolution, and despite the university's disgust and Mr. Ingram's Latin harangue on the disgrace of secretly withdrawing so illustrious a name, withdrawn it had to be. No sooner however had Sheridan modestly taken an ordinary seat in the theatre than loud cries of "Sheridan among the Doctors!" transferred him, unrobed though he was, to the chairs occupied by the honorary graduates. This voluntary acclaim gratified him more than almost any other ovation.[2]

At the close of 1810, the death of Princess Amelia (his favourite daughter) found the poor old King irretrievably disordered; and the worn Regency problem at once revived. Grey naturally thought the times ripe for a repetition, with better success, of

[1] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 410.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 379, and newspaper cuttings *passim* in Eg. MS.

bygone manœuvres. Though he had cooled in his ardour for domestic reform, just as Grenville had now abated his passion for foreign alliances, he had not yielded Fox's doctrine of princely right. Grenville, on the other hand, neighbouring Windsor, and early informed of the King's disease, still held by Pitt's doctrines of the Revolution. "Parliament and the People" must be sole arbiters, and Parliament and the People meant practically Grenville and his friends. Sheridan aptly hit off the situation in verse:—

> "In all humility we crave
> Our Regent may become our slave;
> And being so, we trust that he
> Will thank us for our loyalty.
> Then if he'll help us to pull down
> His Father's dignity and Crown,
> We'll make him in some time to come
> The greatest Prince in Christendom."

Nothing could better condense the great Revolution families' first article of faith.

The document to which these lines point must presently be mentioned. But, meanwhile, in a striking speech which has hitherto escaped notice, Sheridan handled the whole Regency question.[1] He recapitulated Pitt's arguments of 1788. These had now reappeared, but they were in truth only "the phantoms of Lord Thurlow supported by the ghost of Mr. Pitt": so much for the arbitrary attitude assumed by Lord Grenville. Fox had played a great part in these old transactions, and Fox had always stood for emancipation, though Wilberforce, only the day before, had meted out to him a scant "parsimony of praise." What follows, with its analogy drawn from French affairs, can have been no more acceptable to the Prince's would-be jailors than to the Percevalites in office:—

"We are at this moment no House of Commons. The men who dare to execute the functions of the Government are guilty of usurpation. . . . They are a new Directory, self-elected and self-constituted, upheld by nothing but their own

[1] January 2, 1811. Hansard, XVIII., 660.

forcible seizure of the attributes and prerogatives of the Crown. There is no other distinction between them and the executive Directory of France in the year 1795, than that the latter owed their appointment to the appearance at least of popular choice. . . . We seem to act under the impression that what the monarchy has lost has been divided amongst ourselves; whereas the royal power is so fundamentally interwoven with every other interest in the State, that by even its temporary interruption, the life and power of Parliament is paralysed."

And when the foreign situation was examined, little but the phantoms of royalty was to be found. It was impossible not to feel for " those unhappy persons who, temporarily raised to thrones and sceptres, have been disgraced and cashiered for the abomination of exercising over their subjects a more mitigated tyranny than Bonaparte's vile policy dictated. He places the executioners of his vengeance on a platform, and calls that a throne. He puts a whip of scorpions in their hands, and calls that a sceptre. He tells the peoples that they must hate kings. Shall I then by my vote this night give currency to such a doctrine? Shall this House furnish him with additional arguments in support of such principles? . . . Will you allow him the power of saying to the nations of the earth, 'Has not my opinion been well founded? . . . Can you doubt when you see Great Britain, notwithstanding its boasted excellence of constitution, greedily seize the first opportunity that has occurred to curtail the legitimate powers of the Sovereign, and, in such an emergency, to dismember almost the Monarchy itself?' Will this House then become the instrument of Napoleon to furnish him with an illustration favourable to his detestable objects? It is a libel false as hell to describe such to be the feelings of the people of these realms, or to attribute to the Prince any qualities which in the remotest degree can warrant suspicion. Whatever are my hopes and views of reform, I say now, as I have ever said, that we are struggling to preserve a condition of society far above that which the other civilised nations of the world have attained. Is this then the moment to fetter or restrict the constitutional

powers of him whom the public voice has unanimously called to preside over our destiny during the unhappy disposition of his Sovereign and father? Shall we send him forth with a broken shield and half a spear to that contest on the issue of which depends not alone the safety of Great Britain, but the preservation of the rights and happiness of mankind?" Prolonged cheers greeted this conclusion.

It was, in fact, a critical moment. The Whig oligarchs were playing that game in opposition which Pitt had long ago played in power. They demanded restrictions and limitations, because they feared that the Prince's intimates might supplant them. They repeated the old, dreary tricks of adjourned proceedings on the old, dreary routine of the distraught King's medical examinations. The Prince, aloof and impenetrable, at first countenanced these delays, and he told Lord Holland that his views remained what they had been twenty-three years earlier. But Sheridan refused to comply, and again in this instance pursued his own line and voted with the majority. He addressed a manly letter of explanation to the Prince, whose unpartisan attitude he had counselled, whose best interests he had at heart, and eventually he managed to satisfy him.[1] But a more delicate

[1] Some passages may be quoted. After expressing his infinite satisfaction that the Prince had not disapproved his "line of conduct," and his certainty that the Prince would always give him credit for being actuated by "no possible motive but the most sincere and unmixed desire to look to Your Royal Highness's honour and true interest as the object of my political life, directed as I am sure your efforts will ever be, to the essential interests of the Country and Constitution," he records himself "prompted by every motive of personal gratitude, and confirmed by every opportunity which peculiar circumstances and long experience have afforded me of judging your heart and understanding—to the superior excellence of which (beyond all, I believe, that ever stood in your rank and high relation to society) I fear not to advance my humble testimony, because I scruple not to say for myself that I am no flatterer, and that I never found that to *become* one was the road to your real regard." He assures the Prince that on a "practical knowledge of the public mind and character" alone "must be built that popular and personal estimation of Your Royal Highness, so necessary to your future happiness and glory and to the prosperity of the nation you are destined to rule." And then he states his reasons for the course adopted. He "saw no policy or consistency in unnecessarily giving a general sanction

juncture impended. Parliament would lay their proposals before the coming Regent, and he must formally answer them. Who should prepare that answer? When Lord Grenville waited on the Prince directly the Regency Bill had been passed, he was "graciously" commissioned to frame one in conjunction with Grey. They did so, but in a most objectionable manner. Grey's Foxite views of the Prince's rights had to be accommodated to Grenville's restrictive doctrines which he called constitutional, but which were really republican. The Prince's own "consistency" was most faintly indicated; his powers were named, but they were defined as inherent in the King alone, and he was made to speak of "whatever degree of confidence you may *think fit* to repose in me." Moira, Sheridan, and the Prince's Attorney-General, Adam, now directed the Carlton House councils, and it would only be natural if the proceedings of 1789 were repeated—if the Prince were first to draw up an answer himself, then to set the rest writing others for him, and finally to make Sheridan compile one out of the series. This is what seems actually to have happened. Adam had already penned the draft of a reply, and Sheridan had tried his hand also, when they learned (though perhaps they had no reason for learning), that Grey and Grenville had presented one of their own, which they held like a pistol at the Prince's head.

The position in January, 1811, was peculiar. In the first place, the Regency Bill, with its "postponement clause," was a mystery. Perceval was not its author, if Creevey is to be credited, and Lord Eldon himself was perplexed. During its passage, too, through the two Houses, the Grenvillites and Canning voted with the ministry, while Grey, who remained a

to the examination of the physicians before the Council, and then attempting, on the question of adjournment, to hold that examination as nought." He did not wish him to "stir an inch" from his "strong, reserved position," or "to give the slightest public demonstration of any future intended political preference." "I am sure," he concluded, "that the decisions of that judgment . . . have not at least been rashly taken up, but were founded on deliberate zeal for your service and glory, unmixed, I will confidently say, with any one selfish object or political purpose of my own." Cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 379—382.

Foxite, abstained. But Grenville held him in the hollow of his hand, and they soon acted together as if they were absolutely ministers in power. Already they divided the spoil, while Grenville, rapacious and unpopular, stipulated for the two offices and emoluments of First Lord and Auditor.[1] By virtue of these anticipations they claimed a monopoly of dictating the Prince's reply, and they afterwards stamped the presumption of anyone else who dared to put pen to paper as an "unconstitutional" act. But in reality they were merely the recognised leaders of Opposition, and the inner Cabinet of Carlton House was fully as much entitled to word the Prince's answer, and was certainly justified in resenting these Grey-Grenville usurpations. The Carltonites were also busy in counting chickens before they were hatched. Lord Moira was to have been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Sheridan, proud of his Irish connection, his Secretary. All concerned thought that Perceval was doomed. Then again, the Prince had never forgiven or forgotten Grey's early favour with the Duchess of Devonshire, and he abominated Grenville; while Sheridan, friendly with Grey, though adverse to Grenville, found it hard to forward his friend's interest, and at the same time to preserve the long and cherished ties of party association.[2] No sooner had Fox admitted the Grenvilles than the party itself had been transformed. And added to these complications was a widespread feeling that the Duke of York, who had suffered from the revelations of Mrs. Clarke and her accomplice Wardle, should be reinstated as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, which in times past he had so often led to disaster.[3]

Sheridan's short reply (as in the past case of his pithy letter to Pitt) was eventually adopted, and on January 11 it was submitted in the Prince's name to the House. It condensed his

[1] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 137. Whitbread stood out and refused to join them. Afterwards Grenville seems to have conceded the First Lordship of the Treasury to Grey; cf. Plumer Ward, Vol. II., p. 335.

[2] For proofs cf. *post*, pp. 343, *n.* 1, 345, 353.

[3] Among the Holland House MSS. is a letter to Sheridan from Lord Lauderdale of April 21, 1811, urging that any delay in this step would be dangerous to the Prince.

master's disapproval of the late proceedings,[1] and it was succeeded by another letter of Sheridan's composition from the Prince to Perceval.[2] He was the king of compilers, and knew better than any how to fine down and re-animate the rough crudities of his colleagues. The whole transaction too must have appealed to him as a comedian: it resembled a French farce. His main objection to the draft which had incensed the Prince, was its Grenvillite leaven; for the man who had voted for the resolutions could hardly collaborate in expressing the Prince's disapprobation. But before Sheridan had completed his own answer, it was deemed advisable to return the Grey-Grenville document for correction, and a proposed revision in Sheridan's hand is among his papers. With this draft, Adam, followed by Sheridan, repaired to Lord Holland's house in Pall Mall.[3] The scene, as Lord Holland depicts it, with full anti-Sheridan animus, is amusing enough. The reply, be it remembered, was ostensibly the Prince's. Yet Grey, "with much propriety and good temper," argued that neither he nor Grenville could be made responsible for sentiments which they had not written. Adam and Sheridan, "flushed with wine, and irritated by dispute," argued the question "hotly," while Sheridan protested his ignorance (as he was again to protest it in a long recapitulation of the facts) of Grey and Grenville's warrant for a monopoly in such manufacture. This statement Adam traversed, but none the less it seems to have been true. The Prince had repented of his first commission, and when Sheridan entered into the concern, he may well have thought that the two lords' communication was one of those papers which he would be called upon to boil down. Be this, however,

[1] Cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," p. 84. No draft for the letter to Perceval is to be found in the Sheridan MSS., but the document is given in Lord Colchester's "Diary," Vol. II., pp. 316, 317, and in Huish's "Memoirs of George IV.," Vol. II., p. 29.

[2] On January 28, 1811; cf. R. Plumer Ward's "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 379, and *post*, p. 348.

[3] Moore (Vol. II., p. 388) errs in giving the site as Holland House. Cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," p. 84 *et seq.*

as it may, the real point was that until Grey and Grenville should actually be ministers, they were not constitutionally privileged to advise, and that so far as Grenville was concerned, his views and conduct almost disqualified him from advising. This Sheridan stoutly maintained, and he was justified by the circumstances. Thereupon Grey and Grenville retired in dudgeon, breathing threatenings and slaughter against the interloper, whom they hoped to have hounded out of Carlton House.[1]

Their next move was to draw up an apology for their conduct. Had they explained themselves personally to the Prince, no exception could have been taken; but they chose a course which laid them quite open to the construction of malice. Lord Grenville, Lord Holland tells us, had a passion for pen and ink, and the remonstrance concerted by these candid friends bears strong traces of his ponderous hand. The pith of its matter pointed at the rebel who had dared to detach himself from their sway, and a paragraph of innuendo ran as follows:—

"But they would be wanting in that sincerity and openness by which they can alone hope, however imperfectly, to make any return for that gracious confidence with which Your Royal Highness has condescended to honour them, if they suppressed the expression of their deep concern in finding that their humble endeavours in Your Royal Highness's service have been submitted to the judgment of another person by *whose advice* Your Royal Highness has been guided in your final decision on a matter in which they alone had, however unworthily, been honoured with Your Royal Highness's commands."[2] They claimed to be the old-established firm by special appointment. No doubt it was mortifying for these writers-in-extraordinary to find that another pen had prevailed; but nothing could warrant their charges of a double Cabinet and unconstitutional

[1] Cf. Plumer Ward, Vol. I., p. 335, and cf. p. 368. Charles Yorke said that Lord Grey openly expressed his wrath to Lord Liverpool at the Prince's preference: *ibid.*, p. 336.

[2] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 99.

behaviour.[1] The Constitution could not affect a concern unreposed in ministerial hands, and Lords Grey and Grenville were not as yet "responsible advisers." Grey's right to interfere was one of usage, for he had long known the Prince and served him: Grenville had no right at all. Moreover, when all was over and Perceval's Government unexpectedly remained, Sheridan told Creevey at Brooks's that this was counter to his advice, and he was corroborated by Lord Hutchinson, who added that never had a man behaved better. The fact is that he wanted Grey without Grenville.[2]

It was now Sheridan's turn to explain, and he did so in a long and lucid letter to Lord Holland, which can still be seen, interlined, among his manuscripts. He submitted it to the Prince, who endorsed it, and he again wrote to Lord Holland, begging that it should be shown to his revilers.[3] Once more

[1] That these charges were made, or implied, at the interview also, appears from Moore, Vol. II., p. 388 *et seq.*, and from the actual wording of the Grey-Grenville Remonstrance, where they styled themselves "public and responsible advisers," and spoke loftily of "the value of the Constitution."

[2] Cf. Plumer Ward, Vol. I., p. 415 (under date February 18, 1812): " . . . Lowndes, member for Bucks, told me he had heard from Mr. Oliver, a great follower of the Grenvilles, that . . . the Prince could on no account think of employing the Grenvilles, and that . . . if Lord Grey could not separate himself from Lord Grenville he was sorry he could not avail himself of his (Grey's) services." For Sheridan's efforts in 1811 to befriend Grey apart from Grenville, cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 138, under date February 2, 1811: "Sheridan" (fresh from the "conclave" at Carlton House) "was just sober, and expressed to me the strongest opinion of the injurious tendency of this resolution to the Prince's character. Lord Hutchinson said the same thing to me to-day, and added that never man had behaved better than Sheridan." That Sheridan sincerely desired Grey to be First Minister is shown by the interesting manuscript Diary of Mr. Grey Bennett, cited by Mr. Fitzgerald in his "Lives of the Sheridans," Vol. II., p. 176, where in the later developments of the following June, he records: " . . . Whitbread told me that Lord Moira told him that Sheridan had been working night and day for weeks to remove the impressions that existed in the Regent's mind against Grey, pressing that he should be *Prime Minister*."

[3] Sheridan MSS. Lord Holland, in his "Further Memoirs," comments on the Grey-Grenville Remonstrance being shown to Sheridan. But from its wording it was plainly meant to be shown.

the reader must strike the balance between Sheridan's protests and the pretensions of the two lords-in-waiting, who behaved like big schoolboys bullying one smaller, cleverer, and more independent than themselves. Sheridan records facts, few of which can either be gainsaid or verified. His statement is naturally *ex parte;* but though his generalising manner may have glossed over or toned down some of the particulars, his whole case is probable and coherent. Fox had overshadowed Sheridan by dint of personality, but who were these, to usurp his mantle? Sheridan was the Whig scapegoat, and he was sent forth into the wilderness.

He began by adverting to the pain caused him by suspicions that were poisonous. He denied that he had influenced the Prince in the first stages of this affair, and he pointed with pride to his independent vote against the adjournment. He approved, though he had not instigated, the "wisdom" which now led the Prince to seclude himself from rival politicians. And then he detailed the facts. On Monday, January 7, he had warned Adam and Moira of the impending address from both Houses of Parliament. He had no idea then of any personal interference on his part, nor had it been authorised. He was told before quitting Carlton House, that Lord Moira had been directed to sketch an answer. The next evening "it occurred" to him also "to try a sketch of the intended reply." [Was Sheridan quite frank here?] Next evening he read it very hastily to Adam, before he saw the Prince, and whatever he might once have thought, he was now convinced of "the propriety of Adam's conduct."

This last allusion invites an unknown and entertaining interlude. Years later, the Whig go-between, Michael Angelo Taylor, gave Moore a vivid description of what happened on the night before the representatives of both Houses waited on the Prince to receive his reply to their address. Though memory may have exaggerated the scene, it does not certainly add to the dignity of the actors, since it lifts the curtain of history (and Lord Holland) only to disclose a few low comedians.

Taylor had been summoned, probably through Adam, and

it was three in the morning when he arrived. The Prince, Sheridan and Adam were together, and Adam looked "very black." Nothing was finished. The Prince produced a draft partly in his own handwriting, partly in Sheridan's, saying that two fair copies were required instantly, and adding, "Those d——d fellows (*i.e.*, Lords and Commons) will be here in the morning." The Prince then went to bed, and Taylor, the hack, was bidden to copy the drafts. Sheridan and Adam paced up and down at the opposite end of the room. Dissension was evidently in process. Presently up came Adam to Taylor's elbow, and whispered, looking at Sheridan, "That's the d—dest rascal existing." A little afterwards up came Sheridan and whispered, "D—n them all," thus consigning Lords Grey and Grenville to perdition also. Taylor finished his copies, and returned in the day-time. The Prince, who was still in bed, then sent for him and asked, "Are those fellows come?" "Yes, sir," he answered, "some of them are arrived." "D—n them all!" was the reply, while he instructed Taylor to prepare fresh copies as more changes had been made. Taylor saw clearly that mischief was brewing against the Whigs. Lord Grey, "all upon stilts at the prospect of coming into power," had begged for an appointment; but soon afterwards off went the Prince to Windsor, where "the Queen and the Duke of Cumberland settled the whole matter." [1] This then was what had since convinced Sheridan of Adam's "perfect propriety."

To resume Sheridan's document. He read the paper "he had put together" to the Prince, without *having once heard Lord Grenville's name mentioned as in any way connected with the answer proposed to be submitted.* Indeed, he was under an impression that it would be unfair to require Lord Grenville to write one. When the Prince had sanctioned Sheridan's reply, with a few corrections, he told him casually that both Grenville and *Moira* had tried their hands. Sheridan asserts that he would never have undertaken to express the Prince's opinion had he known

[1] Moore's "Journal," Vol. IV., pp. 288—290. Lord Holland too says that Adam when he came first to Pall Mall spoke of Sheridan with some "asperity."

that *Grey* and Grenville considered themselves authorised to frame the answer.

On the next day (Thursday) when he dined with the Prince and Adam, he learned for the first time that the Grey-Grenville draft had been transmitted. The Prince handed it over to him against his express entreaties, and the Prince also disregarded his petition to put his own draft into the fire; Adam's reply he copied and corrected. The Prince strongly objected to every part of the two lords' projected answer; his objections were "radical and insuperable." Finding the Grey-Grenville manifesto unalterable by its authors, Sheridan had ventured to suggest that both papers should be laid aside, and "a very short answer indeed, keeping clear of all topics liable to disagreement," should be drawn up for the approval of Lords Grey and Grenville. With this document, Adam and he had gone to Lord Holland's, where they related what had passed to Lord Grey, though they did not think fit to show him the Prince's marginal notes to the peers' joint document. Grey, disbelieving that the Prince had touched their paper, fastened the whole blame on Sheridan, who was thus forced to let Adam substantiate his statement by producing proofs positive of the Prince's autograph. Moreover, even before the adoption of Sheridan's reply, Lord Grey had hurt him by observing that it was "drawn up in an invidious spirit"; and not till that moment did he begin to criticise the handiwork of the two noble lords. That same night he and Adam saw the Prince, who at their request struck out everything in the final draft that could possibly offend Lords Grey and Grenville. On the Friday—the day before the address was due—the two peers again protested; and again the Prince cancelled more, although a fair copy had already been made.

Such is the sum of Sheridan's recital. Grey and Grenville had been baffled, and when the address was presented to the Regent before a resplendent court, it was Sheridan who stood on his left hand.[1] The document had been so frequently altered

[1] Cf. Huish's "Memoirs of George IV.," Vol. II., p. 26.

that little of the original can have been left, and it should be marked that the date of its final revision coincides with the episode described by Michael Angelo Taylor. Sheridan's recital to Lord Holland reads like a speech, and a passage may be quoted from its peroration. It is eloquent, and it rings true. It knocks down the screen of Joseph-Surface-Grenville, and it reveals the real offenders. The remonstrance of the two peers aimed at ruining him in the eyes of the master whom he had long and only too faithfully obeyed:—

"And now, my dear Lord, I have only shortly to express my own personal mortification—I will use no other word—that I should have been considered by any persons, however high in rank or justly entitled to high political pretensions, as one so little 'attached to His Royal Highness,' or so ignorant of the 'value of the Constitution of his country,' as to be held out to *him* whose fairly earned esteem I regard as the first honour and the sole reward of my political life, in the character of an interested contriver of a double government, and in some measure, as an apostate, from all my former principles—which have taught me as well as the noble Lords, that 'the maintenance of the constitutional responsibility in the Ministers of the Crown' is essential to any hopes of success in the administration of public interest. At the same time, I am ready to admit that it could not be their *intention* so to characterise me. . . . But I have yet to learn what part of my past public life—and I challenge observation on every part of my present proceedings—has warranted . . . any such suspicion or . . . imputation. . . . To Lord Grenville I have the honour to be but very little personally known. From Lord Grey, intimately acquainted as he was with every circumstance of my conduct and principles in the years 1788–9, I confess I should have expected a very tardy and reluctant interpretation of any circumstance to my disadvantage. As to the nature of my endeavours at that time, I have the written testimonies of Mr. Fox and the Duke of Portland."[1]

[1] Sheridan MSS., and cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 394—406. The letter, which begins "My dear Holland," is dated from "Queen Street."

He alludes to his willingness to forego high office in Grey's favour, and he now wrote to his son that with every wish to further his party, he would not be played upon, or only used as occasion required.[1] That Sheridan's advice was disinterested was owned by Lord Liverpool, yet at this very moment Grey and Grenville were offering to be reconciled with the Prince at the price of enforcing Sheridan's disgrace.[2]

On January 25 the Privy Council assembled at Carlton House, and the Regent took the oaths. After Fox's decease, he had proclaimed that his daughter should be trained in the principles of his hero, and now, as if to mark his abhorrence of false Whigs, Fox's bust held a post of honour in the apartment.[3] Then came the strange sequels of February, the cabals of Queen Charlotte and the Duke of Cumberland to prevent even Grey from succeeding; the Prince's forced surrender, despite Sheridan's efforts; the vain attempt to bring Grey and Perceval together; the rage of Grey and Grenville, in the very act of forming an administration, at being told that they might spare themselves further trouble;[4] the respect of the stricken King's wishes by the continuance of Perceval; the letter to him from the Regent (which Sheridan indited), pleading his dread of disturbing an afflicted father.[5] The Prince had been lectured, but he would not be flogged by his two schoolmasters. Henceforward he regarded himself as betrayed all round; he measured all by his own feelings. He misliked Perceval. He detested Grey as much as Grenville. Already he felt less certain of Sheridan. In vain did his staunch friend

[1] Cf. the letters already cited *ante*, Vol. I., p. 79.

[2] Cf. R. Plumer Ward's "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 367: "January 28, 1811. Sheridan, it seems, is dismissed from all confidence . . . at Carlton House. The two aristocrats forced this sacrifice on the Prince as a condition of their forgiving him for preferring his answer to theirs." For Liverpool's favourable opinion, cf. Younge's "Life and Administration of Lord Liverpool," Vol. I., p. 360. Lord Liverpool thought, however, that Sheridan wished Perceval to be retained.

[3] Cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," p. 91.

[4] Cf. the scene detailed by Plumer Ward, Vol. I., p. 383.

[5] Cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," p. 91.

four times defend him in Parliament.[1] The poison of that joint Remonstrance had done its work. When the restrictions that manacled his Regency ended, fresh limitations were proposed. He was made to understand that the Grenvillite Whigs held the reversion of power; aided by Sheridan, he wrote his famous letter to the Duke of York, advising a Coalition, and was answered that Grey and Grenville (with whom he scorned intercourse) rested "on public measures."[2] But their itch for office did not desert them, and they were eager enough to reopen negotiations if only they could be assured that "*some time or other* the Catholics should be satisfied."[3]

Once more the Whig leaders had proved intractable. And then, at the close of February, 1812, occurred a dramatic scene in which Sheridan bore a part. The Prince gave a banquet to his daughter which the Duke and Duchess of York (Tom Sheridan's firm friends), Lords Erskine and Lauderdale, and Sheridan attended. The wine circulated only too freely before the ladies retired, and the Regent in his cups uttered violent abuse of the two Whig oligarchs for rejecting his offers. Lord Lauderdale grew very angry. The little Princess, who adored Grey, and just afterwards kissed her hand to him at the opera, burst into tears.[4] Sheridan, it is said, gently led her out of the room. It was after this scene that the young and insurgent Byron, fresh from his maiden speech in the House of Lords,

[1] On January 14, when Parliament opened; on January 18 (Regency Bill); on January 23, when he said that ministers had set the Great Seal to a Commission to investigate the Privy Purse, and had "committed a sort of parliamentary burglary on the King's Exchequer"; and on February 4, when, reviewing the analogies of 1789, he indulged his humour by reminding the House that a Speaker (Cornwall) had then died, and some might think that the present Speaker should be sacrificed. Cf. Hansard, XVIII., 1123. Sheridan also made a speech deprecating the execution of convicts in cases where access to mercy was closed.

[2] Sheridan seems to have been part author of this answer; cf. R. Plumer Ward's "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 426. The reply was the work of Grey and Grenville.

[3] For the preceding cf. "Memoirs of R. Plumer Ward," Vol. I., pp. 416, 429; "Further Memoirs," p. 117; "Annual Register" for 1819, p. 329; Huish's "Memoirs of George IV.," Vol. II., pp. 95, 99.

[4] Cf. (*inter alia*) Plumer Ward's "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 432.

indited his famous "Weep, daughter of a royal line." It may well have been that Sheridan's conversation inspired the poet. But these cross questions and crooked answers formed only the first act of a drama that came to a climax in the following June. Even during 1811 Sheridan had treated with Lord Holland and the old Foxites for a Government in which Grey and Grenville should not be the chief advisers.[1]

On May 11, 1812, Perceval fell by the hand of a madman. Sheridan was informed of the murder by his friend and factotum, Burgess, of Curzon Street, and to see Bellingham hung, Byron sat up all night, to Lady Caroline Lamb's intense horror next morning. Once again Lords Grey and Grenville plumed their crests and made certain of triumph. Once again Carlton House held those all-night sittings where wine and collaboration decided the Prince's ply and his counsellors' fate. From these, however, Sheridan now abstained, hoping that Grey and the Foxite remnant might at last come in untrammelled by any of the Grenvilles or Pitt's legatees. He judged amiss. What was to happen in the first days of Queen Victoria, transpired in the following June, and, after a series of futile combinations, a bedchamber plot ruined the schemes of statesmen. Nor was a strain which the reader will long have discerned in Sheridan—the blend of a generous desire to benefit with that of an arch-tendency to outwit—ever more evident than on this last and fatal occasion. One more influence, too, had now been added to the Regent's household. Through the renewed ascendency of Lady Hertford,[2] he fell under the sway of Lord Yarmouth, his red-whiskered vice-chamberlain, and the office-seeking Lord Yarmouth was at loggerheads with the rough and honest Lord Moira. Creevey relates how in July, 1811, he met "old Sheridan" at five in the morning, "half seas over" at Brooks's, and uneasy at the position of affairs. He abused Yarmouth to the top of his bent; the

[1] Cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," p. 109.

[2] On November 3, 1811, Lord Grenville wrote to Grey that the Prince was completely under the thumb of Lord and Lady Hertford. Cf. Lord Auckland's "Journals and Corr.," Vol. IV., p. 376.

new elements were obliterating the old, and he counselled Creevey to embark in his own boat, the boat of Moira piloting Grey and of the Prince at one with Whiggery—the phantom that would never sail into port.[1] It remains to trace briefly the preliminaries to the crisis.

All this while, during troubled years, on three things which do him honour, Sheridan remained resolute. In memorable words he passionately upheld the liberty of the Press,[2] nor least in Ireland, where unrest prevailed, while riots disturbed England. He stoutly upheld the Peninsular War. And he flatly refused to humour either the ministers or the Regent by ever engaging to vote against Catholic emancipation. Grey opposed the war, while the Premier had countenanced the cry of "No Popery." Lord Sidmouth went further, and favoured "No Dissent." Added to these isssue were the clamours raised by the rival adherents of Queen Caroline and the young Princess Charlotte, sour apples of discord for such as paid court to a Regent, detesting the mother and jealous of the child. And behind all this by-play the shrewd old Queen worked and plotted to reinfluence her son. Never had she evinced such statecraft and energy. She was certain that the King (who had seen Mr. Perceval) would recover; she was pleased with the Regent's conduct "pending the business." Not without reason did the alarmed son remark that this expression was "no woman's phrase, but a lawyer's."[3] Eldon was still active.

Perceval's fate caused small national sympathy. His reactionary government and tessellated ministry disgusted the people while it failed to cement the traders in politics, who immediately opened their traffic of intrigue. Who was to succeed Perceval? Canning, who had resigned office and was

[1] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 146.

[2] Cf. Hansard, Vol. XX., col. 314 (May 24, 1811). He deprecated the raising of the duty on advertisements, and he denounced the rise in price of cheap publications. "I fear," he said, "no corruption either in the State or in the Government, while the Press exists. Against venal Lords, Commons, or Juries, against despotism of any kind or in any shape, let me but array a free Press, and the liberties of England will stand unshaken."

[3] "Further Memoirs," p. 89.

now in the Regent's good graces, turned his supple mind towards coalition, and ran about ferreting out the rats and the rabbits. But the Regent commissioned the safe Lord Liverpool to find him a Government. Liverpool betook himself to Lord Wellesley, Perceval's spirited Foreign Secretary, the champion of the war and his heroic brother, a firm defender of the Irish Catholics. Wellesley called on Sheridan, who had just returned from canvassing Stafford, while for two months he had neglected attendance at Carlton House, partly from indolence, partly on purpose. He offered him a post. Sheridan declined it,[1] well knowing that office would tie him on questions of moment, and eager to purge himself of new-fledged suspicions. Wellesley tried hard for a ministry comprehending Grey, Grenville, Canning, Tierney and Moira—in fact, a repetition of "All the Talents." But the task was hopeless. The Catholic question, the Peninsular War, blocked his way, and general agreement proved impossible. Above all, the Regent would have none of his bullies, the Grenvillite Whigs—that was positive. His state was hysterical. He "cried long and loud," he nearly went into convulsions, and doubts were entertained of his sanity.[2] Lord Moira was next begged to form a Government, and declined. By June 3 Wellesley's commission had been revoked: "personal animosities," he said, "dreadful personal animosities," precluded "any amicable arrangement." The Regent told his commissioner that "Grey and Grenville were a couple of scoundrels," and he flew into a passion with Moira, though soon afterwards he besought his pardon, and cried like a child. What he probably feared was the reopening of the Catholic problem, what he certainly

[1] Cf. Sheridan's own statement to the House, June 17, 1812 (Hansard, XXII., 551). This statement has never yet been thoroughly examined or repeated:—"I did know what was going on. How? By no means from Carlton House, but from the Marquis of Wellesley, who called at my house in the face of day, the morning he was authorised to form his administration, and showed me his written terms. In an hour he came again, offering a situation, and received a disinterested denial. I knew more from Moira, whom I shall always love for everything that is the boast and pride of man."

[2] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., pp. 158, 159 (May 27 and 28, 1812).

dreaded was the seeming imminence of Grey, now "the Duke of York's friend and slave," and of Grenville, whose guiding principle was to secure both Auditorship and Treasury.[1]

In this pass he threw himself upon Moira, who again consented to attempt the impracticable. In vain did he seek to combine the discordant elements. He offered no place to Sheridan, probably by his own request, for the orator publicly praised him, and, throughout, acted as a spectator who with full knowledge keeps quiet in the background. But one thing Sheridan did. Directly Lord Wellesley failed, he had made a fresh effort to forward Grey's interests, and even earlier he had tried to influence the Prince in his favour.[2] He now warned the Regent against subjecting Grey to his "proscription" of Grenville: such a prejudice, he urged, would be "equally derogatory to the estimation of His Royal Highness's personal dignity and the security of his political power." He added that this advice sprang from no "peculiar partiality to the noble Earl, or to many of those with whom he was allied, but was founded on what he considered to be best for His Royal Highness's honour and interest, and for the general interests of the country." And if he should incur displeasure, he thus justified his motives: "Junius said in a public letter of his addressed to your Royal Father, 'The fate that made you a King forbade your having a friend.' I deny his proposition as a general maxim. I am confident that Your Royal Highness

[1] For the foregoing cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," pp. 134—142; Creevey, Vol. II., pp. 156—159. Even in 1807 the Regent said, "As to my own personal position, I saw that one or other of two things would happen —either that I must submit to the Grenvilles' nomination of the persons who were to come in, and so connect myself subordinately with persons and a party I did not like, or else place myself at once at the head of the general party, liable to all its chances, accidents and variations. I did not like either alternative. . . . " Cf. Croker's "Diaries," Vol. I., p. 297.

[2] Mr. Grey Bennett, in the diary quoted by Mr. Fitzgerald in his "Lives of the Sheridans," expressly says, under the later date of June 17, 1812, "Whitbread told me that Lord Moira told him that Sheridan had been working night and day for weeks to remove the impressions . . . in the Regent's mind against Grey, pressing that he should be Prime Minister." Cf. Vol. II., p. 176.

possesses qualities to win and secure to you the attachment and devotion of private friendship in spite of your being a Sovereign. At least I feel that I am entitled to make this declaration as far as relates to myself, and I do it under the assured conviction that you will never require from me any proof of that attachment and devotion inconsistent with the clear and honourable independence of mind and conduct which constitutes my sole value as a public man, and which hitherto has been my best recommendation to your gracious favour, confidence and protection."[1] The allusion was to his known and declared attitude, which Grey shared, on the Catholic question.

In January Wellesley had brought forward a motion in aid of the Irish Catholics, whose flood of petitions swelled the national unsettlement and the Regent's panic. Some unpublished notes by Sheridan for an undelivered speech on this wise departure, will show how sincerely he pressed the cause of Ireland and of the Catholic claims. They are scored on a copy of Wellesley's printed speech: only excerpts are possible:—

"I won't say," one passage runs, "that you hate them as Catholics, but you fear them. Of course you want to make Protestants of them. And what course do you take? You fleece them to pay a Protestant minister, whom of course they hate. Their language is unheard, but do you make any progress? . . . I will suppose you shall have exterminated their heirs and swept from the visible face of earth the two thousand clergymen, and then you will have before you four million of savages; you would call back their clergy. . . . You set out with this fundamental blunder—that you have never wronged Ireland. . . . You mistake relaxation of oppression as an act of grace. . . . What part did Perceval take in Pitt's attempts to favour the Catholics? He was Solicitor-General to the Union. . . . You cannot respect the King's conscientious scruples without equally respecting the conscientious scruples of the lowest peasant. Whatever bodies may be, conscience is of God's own essence and differs not in quality whether

[1] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 428, 429, from a copy. No trace of the original remains.

lodged in a peasant's or a monarch's body. And how will you alter this? Alter the Coronation oath."

More than this, in a letter of this time to Lord Holland, he satirises the official zeal for "No Popery," and the official anxiety to fasten the riot of the day on Irishmen alone. By the March of this year, everyone knew that Sheridan meant to secede and vote no more except on the Catholic question.[1]

For independence in such a cause he was quite ready to risk the Regent's favour. This is hinted by a further letter of remonstrance—one which, from several of its allusions, may well belong to this period, though Moore (and Fitzgerald after him) refer it to some four years earlier. Its mention, however, of Sheridan's "reserve" is only applicable to the later date, while that of the royal coldness towards him in Oxford Street, tallies somewhat with the Prince's own recollection of this very time, imparted long afterwards to Croker. And, besides, the Regent's complaint that Sheridan had deserted him "both personally and *politically*," together with the stress laid on "Lord Wellesley's business," seem scarcely to fit a much earlier period. On the other hand, Sheridan speaks of "a circumstance that happened at Burlington House" as causing offence to his patron, and, unless (as is possible) this alludes to the past, it seems inconsistent with any year after the Duke of Portland's decease. But in any case this document is so typical of Sheridan's attitude, so germane to the issues of 1812, and so bound up with the causes of the Regent's desertion, that it is apposite here. Only parts need be cited:—

"It is a matter of surprise to myself, as well as of deep regret, that I should have incurred the appearance of ungrateful neglect and disrespect towards the person to whom I am most obliged on earth . . . and in whose service I would readily sacrifice my life. . . . I was mortified and hurt in the keenest manner by having repeated to me from a quarter which I then trusted, some expressions of Your Royal Highness respecting me which it was impossible I could have deserved.

[1] Cf. R. Plumer Ward's "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 450. Tierney so informed Plumer Ward himself.

. . . I suddenly discovered beyond a doubt that I had been grossly deceived and that there had not existed the slightest foundation for the tale that had been imposed on me. . . . Yet extraordinary as it may seem, I had so long, under this false impression, neglected the course which duty and gratitude required from me, that I felt an unaccountable shyness and reserve in repairing my error, and to this procrastination other unlucky circumstances contributed. One day when I had the honour of meeting Your Royal Highness on horseback in Oxford Street, though your manner was as usual gracious and kind to me, you said that I had deserted you privately and *politically*.[1] I had long before that been assured, though falsely, I am convinced, that Your Royal Highness *had promised to make a point that I should neither speak nor vote in Lord Wellesley's business.* My view of this topic and my knowledge of the delicate situation in which Your Royal Highness stood in respect to the Catholic question, though weak and inadequate motives, I confess, yet encouraged the continuance of that reserve which my original error had commenced. These subjects being passed by—*and sure I am Your Royal Highness would never ask me to adopt a course of debasing inconsistency*—it was my hope fully and frankly to have explained myself, and repaired my fault, when I was informed that a circumstance that happened at Burlington House, and which must have been heinously misrepresented, had greatly offended you; and soon after, it was stated to me by an authority which I have no objection to disclose that Your Royal Highness had quoted with marked disapprobation words supposed to have been spoken by me on

[1] The Regent, when he spoke to Croker about Sheridan's last relations to him in a money episode afterwards to be mentioned, said of this year 1812, "Three days after, I was on horseback in Oxford Road, and I thought I saw Sheridan at a distance. The person, whoever he was, turned down into Poland Street . . . as if to avoid me." When we remember the Prince's extreme inaccuracy, the latter detail may well have been a confusion with some other meeting. The coincidence, at any rate, of this ride in Oxford Street does seem to point to the occasion here mentioned by Sheridan. Cf. Croker's "Diaries,' Vol. I., p. 308.

the Spanish question, and of which words, as there is a God in heaven, I never uttered one syllable." He proceeds to excuse himself for postponing explanation, and to plead "a nervous, procrastinating nature, abetted, perhaps, by sensations of no false pride, which, however I may blame myself, impel me involuntarily to fly from the risk of even a cold look from the quarter to which I owe so much"; and he concludes with a protest of the purest attachment to his "gracious Prince and Master."[1]

Nor, in estimating what approaches, should it be forgotten that for some years Sheridan's health had been precarious. In 1809, like Lord Brougham long afterwards, he had even been privileged to peruse his own obituary, and this was humorously touched in the satire of "'Marmion' Travestied."[2] Fits of giddiness and a suffocating cough sometimes drove him from the House, and he tells his wife often of a secret malady that will one day end him. It is sad

[1] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 362—365. All the evidence previously adduced tends to substantiate a long conversation between Sheridan and the Regent, recounted by the "Octogenarian," in which Sheridan expressly told him that he would rather not sit in Parliament than violate his conscience by voting against the Catholic cause; cf. "Sheridan and his Times," Vol. II., p. 226. With regard to Sheridan's neglect in attending at Carlton House, the Sheridan MSS. include a letter from the Prince's secretary, Colonel John MacMahon, to Sheridan, of "Wednesday, 13th May" (evidently of this period), in which he says, "My dearest Sheridan, In consequence of your kind and welcome letter of Saturday evening, I did expect the happiness of seeing you on either Monday or yesterday. I have not failed to make your excuses in your own words to the Prince Regent for your absence at the last *Levée*, with which H.R.H. was highly pleased, though greatly concerned for the cause of that absence. Be assured, my dear Friend, that your letter has rejoiced me, for your long silence to my last, together with your not calling, . . . gave me all the pangs which must be attendant on rejected Friendship."

[2] By Peter Pry ("Teggs, Cheapside, 1809"). It speaks of Sheridan as Phaethon, son of Apollo:—

"No longer on this theme I'll dwell,
Farewell, then, Sheridan, farewell.
May Drury's Theatre again
Be soon rebuilt—its sway maintain;

to watch the weight of his steps and spirits at the close of a career so long and brilliant, but the remedies which he chose, while they cheered for a moment, only deepened his melancholy and hastened his death. The silken chains which had bound him to the Prince were fast becoming bonds of iron. Misfortunes thickened. The irregularities of his life had once nearly parted the wife of his bosom, though henceforward she remained devoted; his gifted son was forced by his malady to quit England for Madeira; and, above all, the affairs of his theatre oppressed him. Whitbread (himself implicated in the same political issues as Sheridan) found great obstacles in financing the theatre and carrying through his scheme. Sheridan—now wholly dependent on his sinecure—beset him for payments on account; Tom Sheridan also claimed his cash, but the conscientious precisian refused to yield a penny, till he should be satisfied that all prior liens on the Sheridan portion were absolutely assured. And in addition, even when the father and son received their due it was allotted in bonds—or, as Charles Sheridan records, in "shares." No cash was forthcoming. Sheridan stormed furiously against Whitbread, accusing him of heartlessness. Funds were sorely needed for his last and vain trial to recapture Stafford, but he only remembered his own straits and not those to which he put Whitbread in the conflict between generosity and justice. On the other hand, he was shocked and vexed beyond measure when he learned that he would be left unconsulted, either formally or informally, in the future direction of the theatre—that he was finally drummed out. He wrote piteously, yet with dignity, on this excommunication, while he pleaded the use that might still be made of his long experience.[1] And all these grievances were aggravated by the fact that he had agreed to defer his claims till Whitbread's own difficulties had been adjusted—from this voluntary compact

> May it out-top its rival near
> And of the renters too get clear.
> * * * *
> Farewell; this trespass pray forgive,
> *And long your death may you outlive.*"

[1] Sheridan MSS. (cited by Moore).

Sheridan even tried to imply some right of control over the management. That Whitbread erred on the side of caution may be gathered from an appeal which about this time Mrs. Sheridan wrote to Lord Holland—it is among the manuscripts preserved in his home, that ancestral treasure-house of memories—it is headed "Cavendish Square, December 5, Thursday":—

"Whatever reasons I may have had," she tells him, after some praise of his sympathy, "whatever reasons I may have had to complain of Sheridan, and however my comfort and happiness may have been thrown away, I never can see him as *deeply wounded*, as I have seen him lately, without feeling the full extent of my regard for him. The disagreement between him and Whitbread hurts me more than I can express, though I was from the first but too well aware that it must happen. What is most distressing to me is that Whitbread has urged me to employ all my influence to bring S. 'to reason,' when I confess that on the subject of debate yesterday my whole heart and soul is *with* Sheridan. I cannot express to you how much I wish to have half an hour's conversation with you before I go to Fonthill. This is the favour I would ask. . . . I am at home at all hours, . . . as I have been very ill, but as I should wish to see you when Sheridan is not in the way, as soon after twelve as you could make it convenient to come would be the hour best suited to me."

But the worst of his distresses was his imminent exclusion from Parliament. He failed at Stafford simply from lack of the funds that Whitbread did not see his way to supply. No post, ministerial or theatrical, was forthcoming. Another seat was designed for him in connection with which the Prince Regent's conduct must be discussed before this chapter of disasters is closed. But for the present we must return to Lord Moira's failure to form a ministry.

For a time his endeavours half prospered, but once more the insuperable element—Grey and Grenville—intervened, and this time Canning proved their coadjutor. Again they forestalled the rights which only office could justify. In 1811 they had constituted themselves the Regent's sole amanuenses; in 1812 they

dictated to him the dismissal of his household. The Prince Regent raved and declared that he would rather part with his life. It was still rumoured that Moira would be minister, that Grey and Grenville had pushed matters too far.[1] Lord Liverpool was treated with; Canning was sent to beat up recruits. But Moira broke off the negotiations by declaring that he would be no party to a restriction undictatable save by those actually in power; he swore that the Prince should never consent to the removal of his friends, and he threw up the sponge. When he did so, and the Prince surveyed the list of intended appointments, he coolly told his disappointed lieutenant: "You see, my dear Moira, they are chiefly Pittites, so the best way is to make it up with the present men, and you may settle it all with Eldon and Liverpool, who are waiting in the adjoining room." Eldon had played the part of Thurlow when the Coalition went out. In ten minutes Lord Liverpool kissed hands as First Lord of the Treasury.[2]

And now comes Sheridan's part in this affair. As has been seen, he had long been working for Grey; but he knew that with Grey Grenville must be associated, and he now realised that the Regent would neither tolerate them nor any fair dealing with the Catholic demands. Sheridan was the Regent's *âme damnée*, and he stood wavering between attachment to his Prince and allegiance to his party. The arrogant dictation of the two peers was the last straw. Neither he nor Moira would make terms with them; the household should not resign, and so far Sheridan's conduct was unequivocal. Meanwhile, however, Lord Yarmouth, an old acquaintance, had planned things otherwise. He fancied he had won over the Regent's acquiescence in the hard condition. But all along it was only a condition precedent, nor was it to take effect till the two pedagogues should have come in. In that event the household, he told Sheridan, would resign, and it was said that he even

[1] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 165; and for the previous statement, p. 162.

[2] Cf. Lord Holland's "Further Memoirs," pp. 143, 144; Lord Auckland's "Journal," Vol. IV., p. 384; R. Plumer Ward's "Memoirs," Vol. I., pp. 486, 487; Fitzgerald's "Lives of the Sheridans," Vol. II., p. 177.

commissioned him so to inform Ponsonby, the informal head of Opposition, the secret agent for Lords Grey and Grenville. Sheridan, when he defended himself in the House of Commons, positively denied that any such commission existed, or that he had himself been made a channel of communication in any way. Mr. Grey Bennett records in a manuscript diary, cited by Fitzgerald, that he had seen a correspondence between Yarmouth and Sheridan in which the former bore him out willingly in every particular—a correspondence which satisfied Brougham as to the truthfulness of Sheridan's case.[1] Sheridan did know, however, that under a contingency the household would resign, and he did not acquaint Ponsonby with his information. On the contrary, he was heard prophesying at Brooks's that the household would remain ; Grey and Grenville would be dished, and he backed his prophecy by a wager. But the Regent took the bit into his mouth and kicked over the traces. Liverpool and the Tories entered on their kingdom, and the Whigs were out till the days of the Reform Bill. Sheridan said that the wand of office had been bartered for three white sticks. Where, sang Byron in "Don Juan"—

> "Where are the Grenvilles? turned as usual; where
> My friends the Whigs? exactly where they were."

Moira, who had executed his commission only to find himself out-manœuvred by the weakling who had commissioned him, behaved with his wonted high-mindedness. When he assured his Prince that he should soon make his bow and quit the country, this most precious gentleman began to blubber, as he once did when someone told him that Brummell disapproved of the cut of his coat:—"You'll desert me then, Moira?" "No, sir; when the friends and counsels you have chosen shall have brought your throne to totter beneath you, you will then see me by your side to sink, if it should so please God, under its ruins with you."[2] In the end he received the ribbon of St. George and

[1] Cf. Fitzgerald's "Lives of the Sheridans," Vol. II., p. 178.

[2] Cf. Thomas Moore's letter to Miss Godfrey, "Friday, March 6, 1812," Moore's "Journal and Corr.," Vol. I., p. 272.

set forth to govern Bengal, not the least illustrious of the Harrovians commemorated in these pages.

A storm of obloquy, public and private, burst over Sheridan's head. He had betrayed his party, broken his word to Yarmouth, duped Tierney, served the Prince for hire, and cajoled the world. The Tories were in, and the Regent turned his back. He was cast out.

The pith of Sheridan's case, which Whitbread confirmed,[1] lies in the fact that the household's resignation depended on an express condition, daily less feasible. To the last Sheridan had hoped that Grey might adjust himself to Moira: with Grey and Moira for ministers, with Grenville excluded, no household stipulation would have been needed, and no one was more surprised than Sheridan himself when Lord Liverpool acceded to power. He had only seen the Regent once in two months, and he had often ventured on unacceptable advice. All this was true, but Sheridan had not removed the false impression that Moira's party was in the ascendant at Carlton House. He had told Lord Kinnaird on the eve of the Whig *fiasco*, that "the Regent ought not to give up the household, and he was sure and knew he would not."[2] His fault was not to have published Lord Yarmouth's views to Ponsonby, Grey and Grenville, who represented the party. He had preferred Moira and the Prince (whose treacheries lay concealed) to Yarmouth and his recent insulters. He had outwitted the Whigs, he was even with Grenville, and he paid the penalty.

The record of the three debates of public defence, interrupted by illness and even anguish, is the reverse of pleasant reading. The senate had ceased to respect or fear him. Twice did his inability to proceed necessitate adjournment, and on one occasion his jaw actually became locked. They patronised, they laughed and gibed and frowned at the veteran whom they had so often cheered when he had fought their losing battles.

[1] Cf. the report of the debate on June 19, 1812, in Hansard, XXIII., 606.

[2] Cf. Grey Bennett's Diary, cited by Fitzgerald, Vol. II., p. 176. Neither Lord Auckland nor Creevey makes any mention of Sheridan's "betrayal."

He had served a Prince who tricked and forsook him, but the assembly of the nation also was now callous towards Sheridan. He moved for the publication of all the papers which had passed between him and the Regent, and some of these we have given, but his motion was negatived. They condemned him untried.

On June 15 Sheridan rose in the House, but he could not speak for long. Two evenings later he resumed his apology. It had been said that he was desperately ill: he made light of his health. He must indeed be indisposed if he could not justify his own character. He had never been an egotist in Parliament, but the papers that he held in his hand, and which in other circumstances he should scorn to notice, called for reply. None more than he had defended the liberty, even the licence, of the Press; none had ever been a warmer friend to freedom. Had his influence prevailed, not one of the present ministry would have been in office. Slander had accused him of secret cabal. He would tell the House what his influence had been with the Prince. Few had enjoyed more opportunities of intimacy with that illustrious person, but "it was only known to him and the omnipotent Searcher of hearts" whether he had "merited or preserved that confidence by acts of sycophancy or servility." The Regent had wished for sincere advisers. He stood by him to the last. He upheld him through thick and thin, and, as usual, it was through thin:—

"I wish the House, I wish the country, knew his heart as well as myself, for then I am sure the unmannerly, the base and most ungenerous calumny . . . would never have been uttered, or, if uttered, would have universally been received with the scorn which it merited. I have differed from him at times in opinion, and I have differed from the party with which I am connected, because I loved what I conceived to be the welfare of my country better than the approbation of either. If I have differed from him, I found a reward in the confidence reposed in me by my country. If I had lost his confidence for exercising what I considered to be my duty, I would even have risked it. If I had lost it, I should have lost what I should always have deeply lamented, and he would have lost, what I pray God he might

soon repair, a man devoted with his whole heart and soul to himself, to his honour and glory and not his station. This is unparliamentary, I know, but the reflections on my zeal are equally so. The income which I derive from the bounty of the Prince, which is the only thing I have" (here his voice trembled), "I will explain. When Lord Elliot died the Attorney-General and others decided that Lord Lake could not accept the office of Receiver-General for the Duchy of Cornwall while absent from the country. I informed the Prince and his brother the Duke of York, that if I took it, I should resign it on his return. I did, and when Lord Lake died the Regent gave it me by letters patent for life. I have spoken only once within the last two months to the Prince. I purposely abstained. I had one audience since my return from Stafford, to explain my visit there. I gave my opinion on the negotiations that were going on, and I devoutly wish it could be published. I have no acquaintance with the Marquis of Hertford. . . . I have continually met the Vice-Chamberlain in many places, but have conversed with him less on particular subjects than any man I know. And now, having shovelled away a great part of that rubbish of secret influence, I will turn to what has been said in this House. I did know what was going on. How? By no means from Carlton House, but from the Marquis of Wellesley, who called at my house in the face of day the morning he was authorised to form his administration, and showed me his written terms. I knew more from Lord Moira, whom I shall always love for everything that is the boast and pride of man. Lord Grey desired the household to resign if certain persons came into office. This was discharging them, for it would be a shabby juggle to give them ten minutes to walk off with their white sticks." Here Sheridan paused from faintness, and the further discussion was postponed for two days more.[1]

On June 19 he returned to the charge with a forced jauntiness. He made great fun of the tattle about his bet. It was said to have been for five hundred guineas; five shillings would have

[1] Cf. Hansard, XXIII., 551 *et seq.*

been more likely in the case of one who now "never betted or played for a single guinea." He would concede that he did bet somebody (was it Tierney?) that "they will not resign." He could not give the money, but he would give the bet. Why had he so spoken? *It was because he knew it was contingent on a circumstance more remote from taking place than ever.* On June 3 he had met Mr. Ponsonby at the Duke of Bedford's. He said, "We hear, Sheridan, you think that negotiations between Moira, Grey and Grenville can be renewed. We do not think so." On the fifth the Duke told him that he was right, but the business was broken off. He sent for Whitbread from the country:—"We met at Erskine's, and Moira wrote to the Prince. Next day I found with regret that all was broken off again. I still thought they would be successful, and learned with surprise on the eighth of June that Lord Liverpool was appointed prime minister."

He had cleared himself of secret influence and of self-interest. He had shown that, much as he hoped for a Grey-Moira coalition, he feared that its chances were remote, though for Lord Liverpool's ascendency he was unprepared. He was right in saying that the household should not resign, unless the Grey-Grenville treaty succeeded. But he left untouched his non-disclosure of what Lord Yarmouth had enjoined him to disclose. After all, if he had held his peace, the message was confidential, and the issue merely one of loyalty to these two peers, and to Ponsonby, who had uttered a "*non possumus*" as his ultimatum. From that issue he diverted his audience by descanting on Lord Liverpool's policy. And he delivered a fine passage on justice for Ireland and the Catholics. As a matter of fact, Lord Liverpool's Government professed a free hand in these matters; each, it was known, was to vote as he liked, and it was even rumoured that the Prince had sent Sheridan to settle the understanding.[1] But if this were true it would not invalidate Sheridan's sincerity for that

[1] For the first statement cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 166 (September 9, 1812); for the second, some extracts from memoirs given by Fitzgerald are the sources. There seems to be nothing of this in Ward's Diary.

cause. The moment was as unseasonable as Fox had deemed it in 1806; but when once the King had been pronounced absolutely incurable, a propitious hour arrived. Yet that Lord Liverpool's combination was never in earnest is shown by the fact that the country had to wait sixteen years before full Catholic emancipation was extorted.

Concession to the Catholics, urged Sheridan, was essential to the safety of the Empire. "I will never give my vote to any administration that opposes Catholic emancipation, nor will I even receive a furlough on that question, though a ministry were carrying every other that I wished. . . . If they were to be the last words I should ever utter in this House, I should say, Be just to Ireland as you value your own honour, be just to Ireland as you value your own peace."

And then he passed to a vindication of his political record. He had ever deplored coalitions. The country had not yet recovered from the shock of the alliance between Fox and North. He had opposed any coalition between Fox and Pitt. He had supported Lord Sidmouth because he had "done more to revivify the Constitution than any minister for years." Members might sneer, but let them tell him what interested or selfish motive could have actuated him. He had refused the Maltese post offered by Lord St. Vincent for his son.[1] Since every sort of union had failed, he could have wished for an administration with or without the two Whig lords, and he should welcome any public effort for a new party. It was a reflection on this great country that it "must be suffered to go drooping to perdition because there were none but two parties competent to direct it." Tierney bitterly criticised the fallen statesman; but Whitbread stood up staunchly in his favour. Sheridan replied, and at last just grazed the point of which his party complained; but he only grazed it. "His conduct," he said (with truth), "was not that of an interested caballer. Moira had authorised what he had done. He had tried for an extended, efficient Government, and not to keep

[1] Tierney insinuated later in the debate that he knew that the post was designed by Sheridan to oblige another.

certain persons out of it. He believed that the two noble lords were honourable; he gave them credit for purity of motive. But he was not the channel of political communication with them. He had been misrepresented. The House would do him justice and believe that no base motive had influenced his course. . . . He who played a double part had some object to gain. What had he gained; what places for his friends; what pensions with which to burden the country; what sinecures for himself? He had not believed in the resignation of the household, just because the contingency on which it rested was more remote than ever."[1]

The sum of Sheridan's transgression was not to have taken the Grey-Grenville group into his confidence, and to have stuck by Moira against the cabals of Yarmouth. Byron, in a passage which Ruskin praises as a miracle of prose, has proclaimed his indignant conviction that Sheridan never forsook the Whigs.[2] This was true; they had forsaken him, and Sheridan now asked his accusers to state, if they could, what advantage he had won? The real answer would surely have been, A gentle revenge. He was completely quits with Grey and Grenville, and he had been bullied alike by them and the Prince for taking his own course.

His apology failed to convince most of the cliques which it offended. Moore, writing in dread of Fox's successors, called the episode which it sought to justify the "least defensible" part of his conduct. Wilberforce characterised it as twaddle, and the ruck of his audience said that he had only failed in shuffling out. But looking across a century, we must feel differently now. He had not acted a direct part—which of them had?—he had enmeshed himself in one of the pettiest webs of dirty intrigue that ever disgraced our annals; nor was he displeased to hoist his persecutors with their own petard. But he had not played for his own hand. Whimsical

[1] Hansard, XXIII., 606.

[2] Cf. Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. IV., p. 239 (Byron to Moore, Venice, June 1, 1818). Of the Whigs Byron adds, "Such blunderers deserve neither credit nor compassion."

to the last, he had staked his honour for the Prince, and he had done his duty to Grey. He had been oblique, but he had been generous, and with Grey he remained friendly to the last.[1]

When all was ended—and by some strange freak he had got back to Bruton Street—he wrote to Lady Holland that he would willingly have dined with her, had not a farewell dinner to his son prevented him—the son now starting "for that state of banishment which the exquisite wisdom and justice of the leaders of Opposition have, among other exploits, consigned him to." "One talk," he concludes, "I shall wish with Holland, and then farewell politics;" "ever gratefully," he signs himself.[2] On that very evening, as we learn from a letter to his wife, his son and daughter-in-law went to witness a performance of "The Duenna."[3] The early vintage of his dramatic, and the lees of his political career had been mingled.

During the remainder of his last, brief spell of Parliament, he spoke six times. His final speech, on July 21, when he withstood the French overtures of peace, was worthy of his fame, and evoked Lord Liverpool's applause. Whitbread had advocated Napoleon's proposals; Sheridan thus unmasked Napoleon's motives:—

"'I am compelled to fight Russia, and to intimidate them will desire Britain's acquiescence in a pretended peace. I want one hundred and fifty thousand men out of Spain, and will tell England that I wish she would release them by withdrawing her troops, that I may have them to use against Russia. If England asks what is my quarrel with Russia, I reply, she refuses to assist me in destroying that maritime strength and those maritime principles on which alone your existence as a great nation depends. Because Russia will not join me in destroying your sinews of power, I will make war upon Russia. I ask you,

[1] There is a letter among the Sheridan MSS. of 1815, where he speaks of meeting him.

[2] Holland House MSS. Sheridan to Lady Holland, October, 1812 (dictated).

[3] Sheridan MSS., "Friday evening. I gave Tom and Caroline the last dinner," etc.

England, to lend me your assistance, and when I have achieved my object, I will come back to Spain, and shall be very much obliged to you.' . . . Submission to France! Not an Englishman lives who would not perish rather than consent to it. To commence a dishonourable negotiation is little less reprehensible than to conclude a dishonourable peace. . . . Napoleon's sole object was to destroy . . . our maritime superiority."

He appealed to ancestral glory; he exhorted Britons not "to scuttle the island":—

"The immortality of nations is not consigned to mortal custody. But to fight bravely and to perish gloriously is so. Take our country. Its condition, with all its faults, is the best that ever existed. Take our Constitution, wanting certainly many reforms, yet practically affording the best security that human wisdom has ever given to man. Yet with all this to contend for, we may not be able ultimately to command success. Even Great Britain for her rights and honours might spend her treasure, shed more and more of her best and bravest blood, and yet at last might fall. Yet after the general subjugation and ruin of Europe, should there ever exist an historian to record the awful events that produced the universal calamity, let that historian, after describing the greatness and glory of Britain, have to say, 'She fell, and with her fell all the best securities for the charities of human life, for the power and honour, the fame, the glory and the liberties of the whole civilised world.'"[1]

Henceforward the House of Commons heard him no more.

[1] Hansard, XXIII., col. 1123.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FINIS

"Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fixed for ever to detract or praise;
Repose denies her requiem to his name,
And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.

* * * *

Behold the host, delighting to deprave,
Who track the steps of Glory to the grave,
Watch every fault that daring Genius owes
Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
And pile the pyramid of calumny."

BYRON *on Sheridan.*

THE dissolution of 1812 found Sheridan resourceless and out of Parliament. He longed to be once more returned for Westminster; but that seemed out of the question. His efforts to secure Stafford had failed. He had no capital; the Regent, who now sneered that Sheridan was a neutral, had ceased to be his friend; and he knew not whither to turn. Lord Moira, before he quitted England, pressed on the Prince the hardship of excluding one so eminent from the national councils. The Duke of Norfolk offered to sell a seat for £4,000, to which he would contribute £1,000, or, in other words, to bring Sheridan in at a cost of £3,000; and the Prince told Moira that he would find some means of providing the purchase-money. This arrangement, however, would not have freed the buyer from subservience to the Duke's political views, and to Sheridan subservience was intolerable. Then came forward a Mr. Attersoll, who had bought the right of nomination for Wootton Bassett—the seat which had been proposed at the very start of Sheridan's career. To this end the £3,000 were to be expended, and Sheridan characteristically told Lord Holland that he would only take the sum from the Prince as a loan, which should be



RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

in middle age, from a bust (probably by Nollekens),

in the possession of Algernon Sheridan Esquire

(a similar bust is in the King's collection at Windsor Castle).

repaid; it would in no way bind him. Whitbread owed Sheridan £2,000 of the Drury Lane balance, and Sheridan was furious at its being withheld; still more so when "the scoundrel," as he now termed him, offered to pay this debt on the strange condition that Sheridan would promise to keep out of Parliament altogether; yet on these onerous terms £2,000 were actually paid. The Regent declared that Whitbread (who championed Princess Caroline) paid Sheridan the money to "bribe him" out of his service, and that Sheridan had then "swindled" him out of the fund that now calls for discussion.[1]

Such was the Regent's subsequent version as Croker relates it.[2] And he added less savoury details—details which even on his own showing refute themselves. The Prince's £3,000 were raised from a fund which Moira held in trust for MacMahon, and the sum was handed to Sheridan's solicitors, Cocker and Fonblanque, who were instructed to pay it over on their behalf to the owner of Wootton Bassett. By a series of stratagems, so says the Regent, Sheridan contrived to persuade Cocker to pouch the money so as to liquidate a debt to the firm; and he then prevaricated by asserting that Cocker had repaid himself. But the Regent's version is not plain sailing. By his own evidence, Cocker was not empowered to pay the money to anyone but the nominator for Wootton Bassett, so that Sheridan's account seems more than probable. We need not, however, rest on a balance of inaccuracies to disprove the Regent's story. When it was first made known, three years after Moore had published his biography, the poet consulted Lord Holland and investigated the affair; and he then assured the young Charles Sheridan, that he was convinced of its absolute untruth.[3] Sheridan may be absolved, but such imputations aggravated the burden which Sheridan had now to bear.

[1] "Croker Papers," Vol. I., p. 311.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 306—309.

[3] Cf. Sheridan MSS., Moore to Charles Sheridan, "Sloperton Cottage, January, 1826:—The story of the £4,000 is, I am convinced, an imposture as to the main fact, that of the Prince's giving it to your father. I knew as well as these Messrs. Cocker, Fonblanque, etc., that £4,000 was the price

Politics were the breath of his nostrils. Even when all seemed over, he never relaxed his efforts for reinstatement. At one time Lord Liverpool forwarded his interest, and at another (so late as 1814) he still made somehow certain of Westminster.[1] Though yet prominent in society and a figure at Lady Cork's, Lady Westmoreland's, Lord Lynedoch's and Holland House, he could not but feel that his career was blighted. "What a wreck is that man," exclaimed Byron in 1813, "and all from bad pilotage; for no one had ever better gales, though now and then a little too squally."[2] Without privilege from arrest, disappointed of theatre subsidies, reduced to the pittance of his post, anxious for the ebbing health of one son and the expensive education of the other, fretting over his wife's illness and his own, he more and more secluded himself. The promoter, Peter Moore (whose wife was aunt to Thackeray's grandmother), and a Mr. Ironmonger of Leatherhead were his last and close associates. Yet this is how the Regent chose to describe these circumstances to Croker: "He now took to live in a very low way, and all he

to be given for the seat, but I also knew that your father said to Lord Holland (who mentioned it to me as characteristic of him) that he never would come into Parliament by the purchase of a seat by the Prince, yet he would be most happy if the Prince would lend him the £4,000 to enable him to purchase a seat for himself, 'for then' (said he) 'I shall only owe the Prince £1,000.' This anecdote, coupled with the certainty that there was no more important or urgent use to which your father would have been impatient to devote such a sum (if he had it) than that of placing himself in Parliament, satisfies me that the *sequel* of this story, which is the only part of it that is new, is *not* true." For the Regent's story, cf. "The Croker Papers," Vol. I., pp. 306—309.

[1] Sheridan MSS. He retired because he refused to oppose Lord Cochrane; cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 169.

[2] Cf. Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. II., p. 320. This is the passage where he remembers with admiration the night when "*he* talked and *we* listened without one yawn from six till one in the morning"; and also where he styles him "poor dear Sherry." He again so styles him in 1814, where he wonders whether Brougham if he lives to Sheridan's age will any better "pass over the red-hot ploughshares of public life." "I hate," he adds, "to see the *old* ones lose, particularly Sheridan notwithstanding all his *méchanceté*"; cf. *ibid.*, p. 397.

looked for in the company he kept was brandy and water. He lived a good deal with some low acquaintance he had made—a harness-maker, I forget his name, but he had a house near Leatherhead." It was inconvenient to cultivate one whose debts, in his own words, were *la mer à boire.*

These days of 1813, however, were those when Byron saw most of him and admired the brilliance of his conversation as only a brilliant conversationalist could admire it. Rogers received him, and he more than held his own in the new generation of wits. Everyone remembers one of Byron's references to his "superb" powers: "I have seen him," he wrote, "cut up Whitbread, quiz Madame de Staël, annihilate Colman, and do little else with some others . . . of good fame and sensibility." "The Staël," Byron wrote to Rogers, "outtalked Whitbread, overwhelmed his spouse," and was "'ironed by Sheridan," who was "too sober to remember your invitation."[1] "Corinne" was now startling London—"Staël the Epicene," as Byron, who called at her bedside, describes her in "Don Juan." "The great wonder of the time," wrote Creevey, "is Madame de Staël. . . . Every sentence she utters is caught and repeated." Lady Hertford scowled on her at Lady Jersey's as "an atheist," though Lady Hertford completely swayed the voluptuary of Carlton House. "She was flummering Sheridan," he resumes, "upon the excellence of his heart and moral principles, and he in return upon her beauty and grace." The two sentimentalists were in tune, and Sheridan's glory had not quite departed with his fortunes. No place, he assured its hostess in 1813, gave him greater pleasure than Holland House; and there is another note which shows that its hospitality was a sanctuary as well as a pleasure. "Will you give me," he pleads, "shelter and concealment for to-day in my quiet tower? I am going to walk after my messenger, and shall receive your answer at your house door." The "two

[1] Cf. Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. III., p. 91. Elsewhere Byron recounts how one night he had to put on Sheridan's cocked hat for him, and to deposit him in the reverse of state at Brooks's. Yet in the same year he again terms his conversation "unequalled."

strange men" whom we noticed at the outset, were once more in pursuit; nor was it long before they ran him to earth.[1]

Things marched from bad to worse. Tom had soon to set out for the Cape, whither he went as Colonial Treasurer, and where in 1817 he died. And in August, 1813, Sheridan at length found himself under arrest in a Cursitor Street spunging-house, for a debt of only six hundred pounds, which he had made sure of paying out of the funds withheld by Drury Lane. Smarting under "the profanation of his person," he upbraided Whitbread (who has been taxed with political jealousy) in the following distracted letter:—". . . Whitbread, putting all false professions of friendship and feeling out of the question, you have no right to keep me here! For it is in truth *your* act. If you had not forcibly withheld from me the *twelve thousand pounds* in consequence of a threatening letter from a miserable swindler whose claim YOU in particular know *to be a lie*, I should at least have been out of the reach of *this* state of miserable insult—for that, and that only, lost me my seat in Parliament. And I assert that you cannot find a lawyer in the land that is not either a natural-born fool or a corrupted scoundrel who will not declare that your conduct in this respect was neither warrantable nor legal—but let that pass *for the present*. Independently of the £1,000 ignorantly withheld from me on the day of considering my last claim, I require of you to answer the draft I send herewith on the part of the Committee, pledging myself to prove to them on the first day I can *personally* meet them, that there are still thousands on thousands due to me, both legally and equitably, from the theatre. My word ought to be taken on this subject, and you may produce to them this document, if one among them could think that under all the circumstances your conduct required a justification. O God! with what mad confidence have I trusted *your word!* I ask *justice* from you and no *boon*. I enclosed you yesterday three different securities which, had you been disposed to have acted

[1] Cf. Holland House MSS., "1813," "Sunday" and "Tuesday"; and for the foregoing, Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. II., p. 240; Creevey, Vol. I., p. 189.

even as a private friend, would have made it *certain* that you might have done so *without the smallest risk.* These you discreetly offered to put into the fire when you found the object of your humane visit satisfied by seeing me safe in prison. I shall only add that I think, if I know myself, had our lots been reversed and I had seen you in my situation, and had left Lady Elizabeth in that of my wife, I would have risked £600 rather than have left you so—although I had been in no way accessory in bringing you into that condition."

This outburst, though overwrought, was true, and its concluding sentence more than justified. Over and over again, Sheridan had helped the needy, and many cottagers at Polesden blessed him for having saved them from ruin. Three days he languished in his den of despair before Whitbread came to bail him out. If Wraxall is to be trusted, Sheridan's morose melancholy vanished after his usual allowance of two bottles for dinner, and Moore tells us that when at last Whitbread arrived, he was still confidently reckoning on being returned for Westminster, where a vacancy had just occurred. But directly he regained freedom, he broke down utterly and burst into a flood of tears.[1] Nor did he ever quite forgive Whitbread, though the rash act by which he died shocked and softened him. In the very year of that death Sheridan told his wife, "Whitbread has been on the verge of a duel from words in the House of Commons, as you will see by the papers. All parties say that he is coarse and vulgar, overbearing, and is become past endurance. I neither see him nor Lady Elizabeth." Sheridan never relinquished his parliamentary hopes, and even in the year preceding his own demise, he dwelt on the fact that he was "much pressed to come into Parliament."[2]

No wonder that he hoped against hope. What must it have

[1] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 442—444; Wraxall, Vol. III., pp. 382, 383. Both Moore and Wraxall err in their date of 1815. Fraser Rae has rightly given it as 1813. The letter, which Moore must have retained, does not appear among the Sheridan MSS. Wraxall gives the place as Fetter Lane, but the appeal to Whitbread is headed "Tooke's Court, Cursitor Street, Thursday, past two."

[2] Sheridan MSS., letters of these dates to his wife.

been for the orator to cease speaking, for the politician to be barred from the game, for one who only a few years before had received the public thanks of the City at Guildhall, to be no more a cynosure to his countrymen? As he quitted the doorway of Peter Moore, who lived hard by the House of Commons, he must often have felt like Tantalus. The thirst was there, but the fruit dangled before him, delicious yet unattainable. And the rupture with a Prince mean enough to have flattered and abandoned him must have been equally galling. Yet in the whole range of his later letters not a syllable of reproach escapes him against the man who had once told him that he might impeach his ministers without forfeiting his friendship.

One ray of sunlight cheered the gloom. This very year Lord Essex took him to Drury Lane, whose manager had already pleased his wife by presenting a box to her. Kean was the new actor, and Sheridan was delighted. Between the acts Lord Essex missed him from the box, and feared that he might suddenly have gone home. But Sheridan had stolen away to the green-room, where he was found proudly installed in the welcome sphere of the past. A brilliant circle, including Byron and Lady Jersey, was present. The actors flocked around him, wine was ordered, the concourse drank a hearty health to the whilom monarch of Drury Lane, and hoped that he would often reappear in their midst. His host accompanied him back to the house which Lord Wellesley had lent him in Savile Row. Even then he declared with triumph that he would be heard again, for the Duke of Norfolk would bring him into Parliament.[1] His heart stayed in the assembly of the nation, and to the last, like Congreve, he slighted his theatrical triumphs. But death already neighboured him; a few days afterwards the illness began which in a year's time was to hurry him away.

As we scan his last letters to his wife and others the crowded events of those wonderful days flit before us—Irish riots, Corn riots, the death of Sir John Moore, which he announced to Lady

[1] Moore recounts this episode, but fresh details are added in Eg. MS. 1975, f. 213.

Bessborough,[1] and, above all, the turbid track of Napoleon. "So all is over in France," he wrote of the hundred days, "and Napoleon is again Emperor! Good God, what an event!" But he lived to see Waterloo. His Hecca and he were reunited, and he thought more of her failing health than his own. Five years gone, in that long letter of explanation which these pages have so often quoted, he had vowed that if she forsook him, as she had then begged leave to do for *his* happiness, he would take their boy "to some corner of the earth, and be no more heard of till" his own death at no distant period "should be by him announced" to her. But such misunderstandings had long since ceased, and they were happy. "Never," he wrote, for the short time that remained, "let one harsh word pass between us." He followed her every footstep in search of health—to the Isle of Wight, to the tranquil garden at Windsor. Her letters to him were his "heart's food and raiment." He cared for her family, and in a letter to her sister Kate he at last adverted to his own ailments. He had seen Dr. Baillie, he had been kept awake "by eight hours' incessant coughing"; his "poor veins," his "inflammation," his "loss of appetite, I fear beyond remedy," his "racking cough . . . which seems to scoff at the other three maladies, and to carry me off of its own self"—all these are enumerated. He pressed two guineas on the physician, who demurred to take them. But "here is too much about myself"; he will speak of Hecca. She was indeed very ill, and when the close came its terrors were heightened and solaced by the heroism of a stricken wife nursing a dying husband.

And as the end neared the shadows deepened. Importunate creditors besieged him again. The horror of the situation preyed upon his nerves. The silver cup presented by his Stafford constituents went in pawn. So did the costly books presented by his friends. Three or four fine pictures by Gainsborough and one by Morland were sold for five or six hundred pounds; and he wrote to Burgess, who had aided the transaction, that "nothing could be more fair or disinterested" than his conduct, though he "grieved" that the price of his "poor pictures" was

[1] Cf. App. (4) (o).

"added to the expenditure"; still he did not despair, the old hopeful voice rang through his trials, "We shall come through." Even Reynolds's prized portrait of St. Cecilia, though not yet transferred, vanished from his possession.[1] His home was dismantled. Mrs. Sheridan sent harassed, even piteous, appeals to Peake, the faithful treasurer of old and new Drury; now it was for ten pounds—four pounds, out of five for washing the house linen, had been owing a year; now it was for a creditor who would not wait; at last it was "for a few pounds," "even two would be acceptable."[2] But so far Sheridan's distresses were concealed as of yore. He had engaged himself to attend the St. Patrick's dinner on March 17, 1816, but he was forced to excuse himself on the score of severe illness. The Duke of Kent, who presided, wrote affectionately to him, and expressed the attachment of the company; he suspected nothing of the sore straits which aggravated the malady. But gradually it leaked out that Sheridan was in want, though he was not dying of it. The Regent, whose recital to the obsequious Croker belied the circumstances,[3] was touched, or felt that his generosity was at stake. He despatched a mutual friend, "Hat" Vaughan, to proffer two hundred pounds with a promise of three hundred more—his support was "respectfully" declined. Grey, it is said, was kind. Lord Holland, Moore fancied, had sent a hundred pounds, but in his own record Fox's nephew disclaims the gift,[4] and the Regent said

[1] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 441, 442.

[2] Sheridan MSS., Mrs. Sheridan, George Street, to R. Peake, Rathbone Place. There is another letter from her to Peake, then in Charlotte Street, asking for a sum that Sheridan told her would be weekly remitted from the theatre; cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 57.

[3] He said that his emissary described a state of disgusting squalor—Sheridan and his wife dying and starving together in "a state of filth and stench . . . quite intolerable" with "hardly a servant left"; cf. "Croker Papers," Vol. I., p. 311.

[4] In a passage which hints that gifts from others were accepted:—"But when Mr. Moore censures the opulent and titled companions of Mr. Sheridan's happier days for not relieving him, . . . I, *whom he almost as inaccurately exempts from his censure*, am bound to say that it is unjust. To my knowledge, some aid of that nature was offered, and more was possibly

that the Hollands had forwarded some ice and currant water.[1] On May 15, Samuel Rogers—the Maecenas of his generation—received the subjoined and heartrending note from Sheridan:—

"Savile Row.

"I find things settled so that £150 will remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the plays successfully in a week, when all shall be returned. I have desired Fairbrother [a faithful servant][2] to get back the guarantee for thirty. They are going to put the carpets out of window, and break into Mrs. Sheridan's room, and *take me*—for God's sake let me see you."[3]

It was past midnight, and Thomas Moore was with Rogers when this missive arrived. Next morning they walked together to Savile Row.[4] A servant told them from the area that all was

accepted than the biographer relates, or than his benefactors ever wished to have recorded"; cf. "Further Memoirs of the Whig Party," p. 237. Lord Holland specifies nothing, nor does he hint at what period the gifts were offered, nor does he allude to an alleged gift of £20 from Lady Bessborough. Sheridan took £250 in two payments from Rogers, who was not "fitted," but he rejected the Prince's offer.

[1] He admits that Lady Bessborough furnished £20. According to Lord Broughton's recently published "Recollections, etc.," Lady Bessborough told him three months after Sheridan's death that she had visited the bare sick-room of the dying man three days before it in Mrs. Sheridan's presence. She asserts that Sheridan terrorised her by his looks and words, and that she departed saying that "he had persecuted her all his life, and would now carry his persecution into death." But this story wants more substantiation than the lady's memory. In the first place, her allegations hardly fit a time when Sheridan is known to have been preparing for death, nor would he have been likely to have thus behaved before his wife; in the second, Lady Bessborough was hysterical, and transmitted her temperament to her daughter, Caroline Lamb; in the third, Sheridan had much earlier laughed at such an offender twitting *him* with exaggeration. The passage, however, does contain remarks about the brightness of his eyes which may have evoked his last message to Lady Bessborough. She seems to have called on him three weeks before his end, and Sheridan may then have alarmed her, but it is just as possible that what he may then have blurted out was heightened in the telling.

[2] Cf. the "Octogenarian's" "Sheridan and his Times," p. 309.

[3] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 455.

[4] Number fourteen, lent to him, it is said, by Lord Wellesley. He had previously lived at number seventeen.

safe for the night, but that the broker's bills would be pasted over the front of the house next day. Early on the following morning Moore brought the money, and the execution was averted. He saw Sheridan. "I found him," he writes, "good-natured and cordial as ever, and though he was then within a few weeks of his death, his voice had not lost its fulness or its strength, nor was that lustre for which his eyes were so remarkable diminished. He showed too his usual sanguineness of disposition.[1]" He dwelt on the profits from a final edition of his dramatic works—he was certain he could arrange all his affairs if only he might leave his bed. Tutor Smyth called not long afterwards, and he has left a moralising lecture behind him. He was told that Sheridan had not long to live. Nothing could be more deplorable, he notes, than the appearance of everything. "There were strange-looking people in the hall." He was shown into a bare "parlour"—on the table lay a neglected prescription. He was summoned to Mrs. Sheridan's room. She was dignified and calm, but "evidently inured" to distress. Officious as ever, he hoped for an interview. Sheridan sent back a kind message—he would get ready and see him. The bell rang, Sheridan was unequal to this interview. Mrs. Sheridan offered him refreshment, which he declined. "You think," she said, "that our poor house can furnish nothing? I do believe we can—let me try." Smyth promised to return next day. "Do so," she replied; "it may please God that he may be better, and he will then see you." But the next day he was not better, and Paul Pry never saw him again.[2]

June arrived; Sheridan was worse, and once more the bailiffs threatened. Denis O'Brien aroused the public to the true state of the case, by an article in the *Morning Post*, which concluded, "I say *Life* and *Succour* against Westminster Abbey and a Funeral." A sheriff's officer would actually have arrested Sheridan in his bed and was about to carry him off in his blankets, when his old friend Dr. Bain interfered and prevented this outrage.[3]

[1] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 456.

[2] Cf. "Memoir," pp. 67, 68.

[3] Cf. Moore, Vol. II., pp. 458, 459. As regards his works, he kept them in a trunk, and it was on this that Lady Bessborough sat when she last visited him.

It is true that when all was over Sheridan's son Charles wrote to his half-brother Tom that the newspaper reports of their father's privations were baseless; that he "had every attention and comfort which could make a deathbed easy."[1] This may have been so at the last, though it is clear that Charles Sheridan wished to tranquillise Tom, and family pride might furnish a further motive. But Moore knew Dr. Bain well, he himself had seen Sheridan, and he is not likely to have been misinformed in these particulars; nor is Smyth, also an eye-witness, here to be mistrusted. More than this, Creevey, who knew all Sheridan's friends, believed that without question his death had "been hastened, if not caused, by his distress."[2] The public appeal evoked a widespread response, and, too late, the Dukes of York and Argyle, with Lady Bessborough, brought the fashionable world to sympathise with Savile Row. Sheridan's real friends, however, at this last crisis, were Peter Moore and Samuel Rogers.[3] The former was in constant attendance from beginning to end, and his account it is that the "Octogenarian" reproduces.[4]

By mid-June Sheridan's state was critical. On the first anniversary of Waterloo Dr. Bain asked him if he had ever undergone an operation. "Yes," he replied, "when sitting for my portrait or to have my hair cut." At first surgical treatment was contemplated, and Sheridan laughingly told the doctor, whom he loved, that if the lancet routed his enemy it would be a victory greater than Wellington's. But there was danger in the scheme, and it had to be abandoned.

Within a week his mind began to wander; on the next day he became unconscious. He could take little nourishment, and

[1] Sheridan MSS., and cf. Rae, Vol. II., p. 286.

[2] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 257. He adds "by his fear of arrest."

[3] There is a letter in the Sheridan MSS. from Sheridan to the band-conductor, Shaw, headed "Chancery Lane, Mr. Holloway's, Wednesday," in which Sheridan asks him to call at the "Albany" Tavern, or he would meet him at twelve next day. Shaw has endorsed on it that he did not see Sheridan. He was referred to "Mr. Moore," who was to have given him some money from Sheridan. But Moore had received none.

[4] Cf. "Sheridan and his Times," Vol. II., pp. 301—312.

his countenance was convulsed. By the close of the month, however, his brain rallied. He sent for his son, he conversed with his wife, whose ministrations were relieved by Peter Moore and young Mr. Earl, who has recorded his recollections. On Thursday, July the fourth, he was raised in a reclining posture to take, as it seemed, his last leave of Mrs. Sheridan. They were left alone together, and the anguish of her face afterwards evidenced the bitterness of that parting. Howley, the Bishop of London, next day administered the Eucharist.[1] It was said that Sheridan followed the service devoutly. That night his slumber was undisturbed, and on the Saturday he could even converse briefly with friends. Once more Mrs. Sheridan sat and talked with him. It was near midnight when they parted. On Sunday, July the seventh, Peter Moore returned to Savile Row. It was about eleven. The church bells had ceased ringing as he passed up St. James's Street to give the sad bulletin at White's and at Brooks's. He saw Sheridan, who had spoken "good-bye" to all. This was his last word. As the clock of St. George's struck midday, he slumbered into death. He had gone, as a friend wrote to his sister, "before pity had withered admiration." He was "no longer before hard, mortal judges, who could only know his actions," but "before God, who knew the strong temptations of his nature, who would make account of when he resisted as well as when he yielded."[2]

The Charles Surface of politics was no more, but the world could hardly believe it. He had grown into a daily habit. To cheer or hiss "old Sherry," to mock his caprices and caricature his blemishes had been the custom of the country for forty years. Yet despite all his feats of folly, it was recognised that

[1] Cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 172, which contains several particulars of Sheridan's closing days. The Bishop was with him on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Shortly before the end Sheridan begged a Mr. Bradley, who watched with him, to go home and take some repose. Sheridan's "power of deglutition" was "completely destroyed," and the "sensorium" "affected." For Sheridan's pious demeanour during the prayers, cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 174.

[2] Mrs. Parkhurst to Mrs. LeFanu, Rae, Vol. II., p. 290. Bulletins, and an account of the funeral are to be found in Eg. MS. 1975, f. 168. For Peter Moore's account, cf. the "Octogenarian's" "Sheridan and his Times," Vol. II., p. 312. It seems authentic.

something great had departed: one of the antediluvians had passed away. "There is no one," said Creevey, "to take the chair he leaves."[1] None forgot how patriotically he had sounded the clarion in 1797 and 1798, when he realised the nation's crisis and warned England to beware not only of internal discord, but of the would-be invaders who had "planted the tree of liberty in the garden of monarchy." It was recognised that the man who had hailed the first rush of the French Revolution as the throes of freedom, had also recoiled at its despotic sequels, and braved the wrath of his party for doing so; that he had pursued his own path, and spurned the little arts of those who twitted him with roguery.[2] Nor was the universality of his mind forgotten, or the spell of a presence, only ruins of which can remain for after-ages. It was felt, and with truth, that a master of human feeling had ceased to breathe; that the sorcery which had constrained the praise of the loftiest would never be renewed. Byron, who took up his pen at Diodati only ten days after Sheridan breathed his last, voiced the general feeling in the fine "Monody" which, in the autumn of this year, was to prelude a cycle of Sheridan's plays:—[3]

"A mighty Spirit is eclipsed, a Power
Hath passed from day to darkness—to whose hour
Of light no likeness is bequeathed—no name,
Focus at once of all the rays of Fame!
The flash of Wit, the bright Intelligence,
The beam of Song, the blaze of Eloquence,
Set with their Sun, but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal Mind;
Fruits of a genial morn, and glorious noon,
A deathless part of him that died too soon.

[1] Cf. Creevey, Vol. I., p. 257. This is where he calls him "the last of the giants."

[2] There was a story of one of these, a lord, who on meeting him in later days had asked, "Well, Sherry, which are you, a rogue or a fool?" "Neither, but something between both," was the answer.

[3] It was written at Kinnaird's request (cf. Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. III., p. 365) and recited at Drury Lane by Mrs. Davison on September 16. It had first been accredited to Lady Caroline Lamb's husband; cf. Eg. MS. 1975, ff. 176d., 180, and Byron's "Works (Poetry)" (Murray, 1901), Vol. IV., p. 70.

But small that portion of the wondrous whole,
These sparkling segments of that circling soul
Which all embraced, and lightened over all,
To cheer—to pierce—to please—or to appal;
From the charmed council to the festive board,
Of human feelings the unbounded lord;
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied,
The praised—the proud—who made his praise their pride.
* * * * *
And here, oh! here, where yet all young and warm
The gay creations of his spirit charm,
The matchless dialogue, the deathless wit
Which knew not what it was to intermit;
The glowing portraits fresh from life, that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring;
These wondrous beings of his fancy, wrought
To fulness by the fiat of his thought,
Here in their first abode, you still may meet
Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat,
A halo of the light of other days,
Which still the splendour of its orb betrays."

In a prose passage, affectionate towards one whom he thrice styles "poor, dear Sherry," Byron stated his conviction that even if a "falsity" had tinged some of Sheridan's positions, he had been driven down and down by "desperation."[1] The thought found touching expression in the poem:—

"But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing Wisdom yields a base delight,
Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own;[2]
Still let them pause—ah! little do they know
That what to them seemed Vice might be but Woe.
Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fixed for ever to detract or praise.
Repose denies her requiem to his name,
And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.
The secret enemy whose sleepless eye
Stands sentinel—accuser—judge—and spy,

[1] "Without means, without connection, without character (which might be false at first and make him mad afterwards from desperation), he beat them all in all he ever attempted." Byron's "Letters and Journal," Vol. IV., p. 239. For part of the context, cf. *ante*, p. 367.

[2] Tennyson has expressed the same idea:—

"And judge all nature from their feet of clay."

The foe—the fool—the jealous—and the vain,
The envious who but breathe in others' pain,
Behold the host, delighting to deprave,
Who track the steps of Glory to the grave,
Watch every fault that daring Genius owes
Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
And pile the pyramid of calumny.
These are his portion—but if joined to these
Gaunt Poverty should league with deep Disease,
If the high Spirit must forget to soar,
And stoop to strive with Misery at the door,
To soothe Indignity—and face to face
Meet sordid Rage—and wrestle with Disgrace,
To find in Hope but the renewed caress,
The serpent-fold of further Faithlessness:—
If such may be the ills which men assail,
What marvel if at last the mightiest fail?
Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given,
Bear hearts electric—charged with fire from Heaven,
Black with the rude collision, inly torn,
By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne,
Driven o'er the lowering atmosphere that nurst
Thoughts which have turned to thunder—scorch and burst."

The funeral was fixed for the following Saturday. It was known that Westminster Abbey was to be Sheridan's resting-place. It was hoped that according to his desire his remains might repose among statesmen and next to Fox. For some reason never explained this was not permitted, and perhaps the Whig hierarchs prevented the profanation. It was decided that his grave should be by Garrick's, on the spot where he had himself stood as chief mourner at those long-past obsequies. And a fresh surprise was in store: a funeral of unsurpassed ostentation, followed by dukes and peers and princes. Sheridan's dislike of such pomp had been expressed; nor was the parade by desire of his family.[1] The Whig party may be absolved from purposing a demonstration and exploiting the dead man whom they had so often exploited while alive, for

[1] Creevey (Vol. I., p. 257) records, "Peter Moore invites people to attend, and several are going." Fifty "special invitations," however, were sent out by Charles Sheridan; cf. Eg. MS. 1975, f. 172.

Grey and Grenville were absent, while Lord John Townshend wrote with regret that he could not attend. But something of party display was palpable. Among the pall-bearers were the Duke of Bedford—the Duke of Portland's successor as head of the party,—Lauderdale, Mulgrave, Lord Holland and Lord Spencer. Among the Earls who attended were Thanet and Bessborough; among the Lords, George Cavendish and Robert Spencer. The Bishop of London was a pall-bearer. Others there were whose presence was significant otherwise: Canning, whom Sheridan had protected as a boy; Sidmouth, whom he had defended against Fox; Yarmouth, the sole representative of the Prince's household; personal friends like Erskine and Lynedoch, the Dukes of York, Sussex, and Argyle. Burgess, Bouverie, and Asgill followed. Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington both wrote feeling letters of condolence and regret. But the real friends outside his immediate circle, marched modestly and aloof in the long procession—Peter Moore, Dr. Bain, and Samuel Rogers. The bier was deposited at Peter Moore's house, and thence, amid showers of rain and crowds of weeping onlookers, the *cortège* wended its way to Westminster Abbey. On the coffin's arrival at Poets' Corner, it was immediately lowered into the grave, since the Cathedral rules forbade a celebration of the whole service when the interment was not in the Church of the Abbey. The sub-Dean, Dr. Fynes, officiated in the succeeding rites, but his voice was so faint as to be scarcely audible. The large slab which now marks the vault was placed by Peter Moore—"the tribute of an attached friend": the stone was not ready till the twenty-fifth of the following month, and the *Morning Chronicle* published a poetical inscription. The tablet afterwards erected to Sheridan's father was the work of a comparative stranger.[1] It was the same now with the son. Poets commemorated the brilliance, moralists deplored the lapses, patricians divided the honours, of genius. Peter Moore bore a nobler part in that last memorial scene.[2]

[1] It was not erected till 1823. Dufferin Papers.

[2] Moore, who was the last to wear a pig-tail in society, failed

The splendour of the funeral, contrasting with the loneliness of the end, awoke a cry of indignation which Thomas Moore accentuated; nor was his wrath without cause, though doubtless family pride had cast a veil over Sheridan's last necessities:—

"Oh! it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And friendship so false in the great and high-born;
To think what a long line of titles may follow
The relics of him who died friendless and lorn.

How proud they can press to the funeral array
Of him whom they shunned in his sickness and sorrow,
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow.

Was this, then, the fate of that high-gifted man,
The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall—
The orator, dramatist, minstrel—who ran
Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all?"[1]

The point emphasised at the beginning must be repeated at the close: Sheridan was the scapegoat of the Whig party. His debts, which were not great, were punctually paid by his survivors; but the debt to him of that party has never been paid, and remains a discredit to their past.

Yet Sheridan's death was not out of keeping with his life. All along he had moved in slippery places, and concealed his circumstances in his eagerness to shine. Hard facts outstripped his hopes, and the outward show belied the inward bitterness.

When Moore was engaged on his biography, Byron well summed up the subject in a fine letter from Venice which has been cited already. "I do not know," he writes, "any good

in the East India Company's service, helped Burke and Sheridan in the Warren Hastings trial, and became a company promoter and adroit manager of private Bills in Parliament. In 1825 he was ruined and escaped to France to avoid arrest; cf. Mr. R. Prothero's note to his edition of Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. III., p. 202. For some of the preceding details, cf. Eg. MS. 1975, ff. 172, 174. Wellesley's letter of regret to Lauderdale is to be found in the latter of these folios. It pays a very high tribute to Sheridan's "talents, public merits, and amiable character." "Although," says Wellesley, "I had the misfortune to differ with him in public life, I received many testimonies of his favourable opinion."

[1] These verses were published in the *Morning Chronicle*.

model for a life of Sheridan but that of *Savage*. Recollect however that the life of such a man may be made far more amusing than if he had been a Wilberforce. . . . As for his creditors, remember Sheridan *never had* a shilling, and was thrown with great powers and passions into the thick of the world, and placed upon the pinnacle of success with no other external means to support him in his elevation. Did Fox*** *pay his* debts—or did Sheridan take a subscription? Was the ***'s drunkenness more excusable than his? Were his intrigues more notorious than those of his contemporaries? And is his memory to be blasted and theirs respected? . . . Compare him with the coalitioner Fox and the pensioner Burke as a man of principle, and with ten hundred thousand in personal views, and with none in talent, for he beat them all *out* and *out* . . . in all he ever attempted. But, alas! poor human nature!"[1]

The tragedy of his death was not complete. On September 12, 1817, his son Tom died at the Cape, beloved by all who knew him. On October 27, the wife who had so heroically nursed Sheridan, succumbed to her fatal illness. She lies in Old Windsor churchyard, not far from the tomb which commemorates her husband's old acquaintance, the hapless "Perdita" Robinson.[2] In the same year Sheridan's sister Alicia passed away. In little more than twelve months, all his immediate kindred but his son Charles and his sister Elizabeth[3] had perished.

The record of Sheridan's life covers a long distance, a far country, and many devious tracks. It were vain to repeat the

[1] Byron's "Letters and Journals," Vol. IV., p. 239.

[2] Among the Dufferin Papers is an interesting account of Tom Sheridan's last days, and his relations as Colonial Treasurer to Lord Charles Somerset, the pompous Governor of the Cape. Another account of Tom Sheridan remains in Eg. MS. 1975, f. 192. For his death, cf. *ibid.*, f. 180. On Mrs. Sheridan's tomb at Old Windsor is the following: "After enduring with unexampled resignation and heroism an illness protracted during five years, she was released on the 27th of October, 1817, aged 41 years." The illness was cancer. On Perdita's tombstone are some sentimental verses by Pratt the Della-Cruscan.

[3] She died in 1825.

retrospect with which these volumes opened. In English political history Sheridan is unique; he does not relate himself to the rules or traditions of his associates. As a minstrel he owned the lyrical fancy which as a satirist he pruned and pointed. His strains often sound formal to an age far removed from the artificiality of his time. To his contemporaries his verse seemed informal, and despite the set passages of his rhetoric, so often was his eloquence. He roamed at will. As a comic dramatist he achieved the highest distinction of the day which he embodied, and he surpassed that day by the power of his works to survive it. On this vitality of Sheridan I have dwelt, and it is not restricted to his compositions. There are beings who possess the talisman of survival. They continue to live in a romance of their own, long after they have vanished from the stage. Their vividness, their picturesqueness, haunt the scenes of remote ages and pervade the imagination of mankind. They are themselves a drama. With them and of them, history becomes legend, and legend turns into history. A cycle of myth gathers round them, and they propagate their own fanciful essence in many forms and in divers places. Such was Byron, such has already proved Disraeli. It is not so with the abstract characters of the world. No after-plot will ever adhere to Locke, or to Newton, or to Bentham, or to John Stuart Mill. But this posterity of the personal is reserved for the dreamers and fantasts, for those who have the magnetic quality which always compels the future. Sheridan was no dreamer, but a fantast he certainly was; nor will he ever cease to interest even those who cannot respect him. At this moment, both in England and America, the tragi-comedy of his life, and the living force of his plays attract many who know little of the inner circumstances that attended them. A sprite Sheridan remains, hovering above the puppet-show of existence. He belongs not to the white-robed immortals who sit radiant and aloft, but to the elfin band who have never faded from the atmosphere. His province is not history but wonderland.

THE END.

# APPENDIX

TO

## THE SECOND VOLUME

## I

### MRS. SHERIDAN'S LETTERS FROM HARROW TO ALICIA LeFANU

(A)

*Friday, December 20th* [1781].

My dear Lissy,

I suppose I may still take the liberty of calling you so tho' you are become a grave matron with a son nine years old? I fear you have thought strangely of my long silence but will you believe me when I assure you that till yesterday I never received your letter—it came while I was at Brighthelmstone, and was left as usual with Dick's papers at the House in Grosvenor Place, wh. I have never enter'd since—it was one of Sherry's whims our going there and it prov'd the most inconvenient situation in the world for us all, he intended at that time not to have another Country House as our lease of Heston was expired, but has since chang'd his plan, and as he has taken a very pretty place at Harrow, for a long lease, where he means to put my dear Tom next year, he consented to our giving up the House in Grosvenor Place wh. was so far away from all his business and to our returning to our old house in Queen S$^{t}$ where we now are as we have never been able to let it and have still a year to come of the lease. Ever since I have known there was a letter for me from you I have entreated and teas'd Dick to no purpose to get it for me, for he will not allow a creature to touch his papers but himself, but I could not prevail so busy has he been since we came to town and, as I knew not whether I was to thank you for accepting my invitation or scold you for refusing it, you see I have been oblig'd to run the risk of appearing rude and neglectful but I think you will accept of my excuse and that I need not trouble you any more with apologies. My Congratulations come rather of the latest to be sure, but they are not the less sincere and I hope (as you have partly promis'd) in the Spring to have an opportunity of expressing my joy at

your happiness more forcibly than I can do at this distance by words. You will no doubt rejoice with us on Dick's triumph over the Ministry All their efforts to procure a petition against him have been overthrown by his spirited exertions and he had the satisfaction of bringing himself the intelligence of their ill success to the House of Commons on the last day of receiving petitions, when they were all waiting in expectation of its coming—so that is one cloud removed which has for some time hung over his head. The sale of the Opera House is likewise a very great relief to him, as it was impossible for him to attend to so many concerns without being impos'd on at one or the other—Drury Lane has been more successful this year than any yet. Mr. Tickell's Opera succeeds very well, and is very much liked. He is himself in Town but goes to Norwich in a day or two to bring his *little big* wife from thence She has been on a visit to her friend the Dean there these two months, but it is high time for her to return as she expects to lie in the end of next month. I am happy to assure you that your request in regard to Mr. H. Lefanu has been complied with notwithstanding the delay of the Letter as S. heard of his being in Town by Mr. Thompson and put his name on the list directly. I hear of your father often, but we never see him—this quarrelling is very foolish. If poor Dick was as rich as he ought to be there would be no cause of complaint against him, I'm sure, but indeed your father is too severe on him. I am much oblig'd to Miss Cuningham for her anxiety in regard to my uncle's picture, and to you for taking so *active* a part in securing it for her. I believe indeed your conscience will not trouble you much on the occasion. I shall be happy to hear that she is settled according to her inclination—it is impossible for me not to applaud her choice, since he has been very obliging in his compliments to me—you may give my best wishes to them both. Mind now you are not to neglect your pretty comedy upon any account. I shall expect to see it quite complete in spring that it may be brought out early next year. Adieu dear Lissy give my love to Charles and Bess—tell the former if he goes over to Ministry I'll never forgive him—you dont know what a violent Politician I am perhaps. His Pamphlet is highly spoken of but it is not decided enough for me. Tell him I intend to turn them all out yet.

(B)

HARROW, *December 9th* [1782].

Here I am still you see in spight of cold weather and all the Temptations that London contains. My sister and Mr. Tickell left us yesterday, after spending near a month with me—they have taken a House in Town where I have promised to return their visit next week. Mr. O'Beirne came here with S. last Sunday and delivered me your packet which I thank you for very much. I had rec[d] your letter the day before but you judged right when you supposed that no other has reach'd my hand since the one I got at Crewe Hall, we have been so unsettled sometimes at my Father's, and sometimes here, that I am not much surprised at their miscarrying besides you know Dick hardly ever reads his own letters, so that if ever a letter of

mine finds its way into his pocket unopen'd it might as well be in the bottomless Pit for any good I am ever like to reap by it. I am very sorry to find you have been so poorly but as you are going on so well I have no doubt that the much dreaded month of January will deliver you from all your complaints together, for I believe the wise people say that if once a woman in your situation gets into the habit of having Rheumatism or Toothache or any of those abominable companions she never gets rid of them till she is brought to bed. This would be bad comfort for you if you were not so near the end of your sufferances, but that prospect I should think delightful enough to make amends for everything. What does your friend Mrs. Cleghorn think of the matter now? Does she make a pretty nurse? or is she really so unfeminine as to dislike the tender offices of a mother? Apropos I have been scribbling since I saw you some foolish verses on this subject to my sister's little Bess. I will send them to you as you have flatter'd me you do not dislike my *Poeoa-Trees* ma'am--and pray remember the promise you made me of sending me certain Poems about Lions &c. for I have begun my book and you cannot think what a respectable figure it cuts already. It is impossible my dear Lissy to say how much I feel your kindness and how gratefully my heart thanks you for those sincere professions of friendship which your Letter contains. I trust and hope you will be fully enabled to endulge every generous liberal feeling of your heart, tho' God forbid your dear brother should ever be so far abandon'd by his fortune and friends as to be an interrupter of your happiness by his distresses. His talents and integrity will always place him above those who have richer purses and more contracted minds. If he is happy I shall be so in any situation and I will yet hope that a time will come that will reward him for all his present vexations. When I wrote last some particular circumstances had given me a fit of the glooms, I am sorry I infected you with them especially now when you want everything to cheer you up, and give you spirits. I dont know how politics are to go this winter but I fear not yet so favourable to us as your good wishes would fain make them—however I hope the best. L$^{d}$ Shelburne is very weak I understand and the Whig Party are in good spirits What this will produce, time only can discover, in the meantime we must "sprinkle cool patience" on our hopes. My poor friend Mrs. Canning has been dangerously ill, her life despair'd of, but thank God she is now recovering tho' but slowly. I saw her after her lying in, on her first coming down stairs perfectly well, and the next day she was seiz'd with a fever, which had like to have depriv'd me of the woman I love best in the world out of my own family. Do you ever see Mrs. Percival? She is a very pleasing woman too I think but not half the *real* good about her that Mrs. C. has. I will not ask you to write often to me now as I should suppose stooping must be very inconvenient to you, but pray beg Bess or Mr. L. to give me a line now and then to let me know how you go on and particularly the moment you are so happy as to be saluted mother. I

have been expecting the Play--but I suppose that too is obliged to be postponed for dearer considerations. Adieu dear Lissy. I wish I had any intelligence to give you that would amuse you, but situated as I am at present I know nothing of anybody or anything—so you must be content with my assuring you that I am sincerely and affectionately

Yours

E. A. SHERIDAN.

Remember me to Bess and Mr. Lefanu.

(C)

*Thursday Morn* [1782].

DEAR LISSY

Your letter which I have this moment received has vex'd and surpris'd me beyond measure I have been in daily and hourly expectation of seeing you for these last ten days, and to tell you the truth have been very much piqued that you should prefer your society in London to that at Harrow. I commissioned Mr. Angelo to tell you this and likewise that my sister felt a good deal hurt that being at so very short a distance you express so little inclination to see her. With these tempers in regard to you you may easily suppose your announcing so quietly your intention of going to Ireland the day after tomorrow without seeing either of us has not a little disconcerted us, and if you persist in such a resolution I must be oblig'd to own it will not be consistent with your usual good nature and friendship for me,—taking it therefore for granted that you will not refuse my request, (as a day or two more or less cannot make any material difference to Mr. L.) I send this by Dick who will I know add weight to my entreaties that you will return with him in the coach wh. went to town this morning and at least spend one day more with us before we part for so long a time, for tho' I am not quite so *croakerish* as to suppose we shall never meet again yet the chance of our seeing you in Ireland is too uncertain to build much hope on. Therefore I once more conjure you if you do not wish to make both Sherry and myself think unkindly of you that you lose no time in granting our request.

Ever yours

E. A. SHERIDAN.

## II

### THE PRINCE OF WALES'S ANSWER (WRITTEN BY SHERIDAN) TO THE LETTER SENT TO HIM BY MR. PITT DATED "DOWNING STREET, TUESDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 30, 1788"

[*Transcribed from the draft in the Sheridan MSS. and from the* "St. James's Chronicle" *of Saturday, January 24—Tuesday, January 27, 1789.*]

THE Prince of Wales learns from Mr. Pitt that the Proceedings in Parliament are now in a Train which enables Mr. Pitt according to the

Intimation in his former Letter, to communicate to the Prince the Outline of the Plan which his Majesty's confidential Servants conceive proper to be proposed in the present Circumstances.

Concerning the Steps already taken by Mr. Pitt, the Prince is silent—nothing done by the two Houses of Parliament can be a proper Subject of his Animadversion; but when, previously to any Discussion in Parliament, the Outlines of a Scheme of Government are sent for his Consideration, in which it is proposed that he shall be personally and principally concerned, and by which the Royal Authority, and the publick Welfare may be deeply affected, the Prince would be unjustifiable were he to withhold an explicit Declaration of his Sentiments. This Silence might be confirmed into a previous Approbation of a Plan, the Accomplishment of which every Motive of Duty to his Father and Sovereign, as well as of regard for the publick Interest, obliges him to consider as injurious to both. In the State of deep Distress in which the Prince and the whole Royal Family were involved, by the heavy Calamity which has fallen upon the King, and at a Moment when Government, deprived of its chief Energy and Support, seemed peculiarly to need the cordial and united Aid of all Descriptions of Subjects, it was not expected by the Prince, that a Plan should be offered to his Consideration, by which Government was to be rendered difficult, if not impracticable, in the Hands of any Person, intended to represent the King's Authority—much less in the Hands of his eldest Son; the Heir-Apparent of his Kingdoms and the Person most bound to the Maintenance of his Majesty's just Prerogatives and Authority, as well as most interested in the Happiness, the Prosperity, and the Glory of the People.

The Prince forbears to remark on the several Parts of the Sketch of the Plan laid before him; he apprehends it must have been formed with sufficient Deliberation to preclude the Probability of any Argument of his producing an Alteration of Sentiment in the Projectors of it. But he trusts with Confidence to the Wisdom and Justice of Parliament, when the Whole of the Subject, and the Circumstances connected with it, shall come under their Deliberations.

He observes therefore only generally on the Heads communicated by Mr. Pitt, and it is with deep Regret the Prince makes the Observation that he sees in the Contents of that Paper, a Project for producing Weakness and Insecurity in every Branch of the Administrations of Affairs. A Project for dividing the Royal Family from each other; for separating the Court from the State; and thereby disjoining Government from its natural and accustomed Support. A Scheme disconnecting the authority to command Service from the Power of animating it by Reward; and for allotting to the Prince all the invidious Duties of Government, without the Means of softening them to the Publick, by any one Act of Grace, Favour, or Benignity.

The Prince's feelings on contemplating this Plan, are also rendered still more painful to him, by observing that it is not founded on any general

Principle, but is calculated to infuse Jealousies and Distrust (wholly groundless, he trusts) in that Quarter, whose Confidence it will ever be the first Pride of his Life to merit and obtain. With regard to the Motive and Object of the Limitations and Restrictions proposed, the Prince can have but little to observe. No Light or Information is afforded him by his Majesty's Ministers on those Points. They have informed him what the Powers are which they mean to refuse him, not why they are withheld.

The Prince, however, holding as he does, that it is an undoubted and fundamental Principle of the Constitution, that the Powers and Prerogatives of the Crown are vested there, as a Trust for the Benefit of the People, and that they are sacred only as they are necessary to the Preservation of that Power and Balance of the Constitution which Experience has proved to be the true Security of the Liberty of the Subject, must be allowed to observe that the Plea of Public Utility ought to be strong, manifest and urgent, which calls for the Extinction or Suspension of any one of those essential Rights in the supreme Power of its Representative; or which can justify the Prince in consenting that, in his Person, an experiment shall be made to ascertain with how small a portion of the Kingly Power, the Executive Government of this Country may be carried on.

The Prince has only to add that if Security for his Majesty's repossessing his rightful Government, whenever it shall please Providence in Bounty to this Country to remove the Calamity with which he is afflicted, be any part of the Object of this Plan, the Prince has only to be convinced, that any Measure is necessary, or even conducive to that End, to be the first to urge it as the preliminary and permanent Consideration of any Settlement in which he could consent to share.

If Attention to what it is presumed must be his Majesty's Feelings and Wishes on the happy Day of his Recovery be the object, the Prince expresses his firm Conviction, that no Event would be more repugnant to the Feelings of his Royal Father, than the Knowledge that the Government of his Son and Representative had exhibited the Sovereign Power of the Realm in a State of Degradation, of curtailed Authority and diminished Energy—a State hurtful in Practice to the Prosperity and good Government of his People, and injurious in its Precedent to the Security of the Monarch and the Rights of his Family.

Upon that part of the Plan which regards the King's real and personal Property, the Prince feels himself compelled to remark that it was not necessary for Mr. Pitt, nor yet proper to suggest to the Prince, the Restraint he proposes against the Prince's granting away the King's real or personal Property.

The Prince does not conceive that, during the King's Life, he is by Law entitled to make any such Grant; and he is sure that he has never shown the smallest Inclination to possess any such Power. But it remains with Mr. Pitt to consider the eventual Interests of the Royal Family and to provide a proper and natural Security against the mismanagement of them in others.

The Prince has discharged an indispensible Duty in thus giving his free Opinion on the Plan submitted to his Consideration.

This Conviction of the Evils which may arise to the King's Interests, to the Peace and Happiness of the Royal Family, and to the Safety and Welfare of the Nation, from the Government of the Country remaining longer in its present maimed and debilitated state, outweighs, in the Prince's Mind, every other Consideration, and will determine him to undertake the painful Trust imposed upon him by the present melancholy Necessity (which of all the King's Subjects he deplores the most) in full Confidence that the Affection and Loyalty to the King, the experienced Attachment to the House of Brunswick, and the Generosity which has always distinguished this Nation, will carry him through the many Difficulties, inseparable from this most critical Situation, with Comfort to himself, with Honour to the King, and with Advantage to the Publick.

# APPENDIX III

## GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE'S DIARY

# III

## GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE'S DIARY.

*November* 20, 1788—*January* 12, 1789.

### Prefatory Note.

The subjoined Diary—"a kind of incoherent journal"—which the author found in his researches at Devonshire House, was written by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, during the crisis of the King's health and the political intrigues that attended it between November, 1788, and January, 1789. On November 20, when the two Houses met to adjourn for a fortnight, the tragi-comedy began in earnest. On December 4, the examination of the doctors by a Committee in the House of Commons preluded a series of manœuvres that read like romance. The Diary only extends to January 12, 1789, but for some months afterwards until the King publicly returned thanks for his recovery, in St. Paul's, Pitt maintained his mastery and the Opposition, their hopes and bickerings. This document sheds inner light on what history has revealed, and it establishes Sheridan's authorship of the "Letter to Mr. Pitt," which has hitherto been accredited to Burke.

It seems to be pieced out of at least two journals. The principal one is in the form of a day-book, kept for the information of her mother. The duplicates which accompany it often supply additional matter, though they as often repeat the main Diary. They are here indicated by brackets, and the journal thus presents an appearance of double entry. It will be noticed that the Duchess is an adept in what Mrs. Malaprop styles "orthodoxy."

The Duchess's preface was written as late as 1802, and the verdict on Sheridan is manifestly coloured by the later standpoint of Fox. Her portraits of the Prince of Wales and of Fox are highly characteristic. A second explanatory jotting indicates some omissions in the matter set down for her mother. A third is merely the statement of how she came up from the country to witness this exciting drama. A letter from Mr. Crawford, announcing the early rumours, accompanies them.

To Adolphus's History, and the usual printed sources of information for this juncture, should be added Tomline's "Life of Pitt," and Louis Dutens's "Histoire de ce qui est passé pour l'Establissement d'un Régence." Dutens, it may be remembered, was a witness at Lady Hamilton's wedding.

France took the keenest interest in all the proceedings, and Calonne, then present in England, co-operated with the Whigs.

Walter Sichel.

### The Duchess's Preface.

Having found some fragments of a journal which I wrote during the King's madness and while the question of Regency was debating, I am resolv'd to collect them tho' very imperfect—for however well known the great events of that period may be, yet the daily reports and opinions of a Society so much connected as mine was, with Opposition, cannot be uninteresting—my situation also enabled me to judge of the various little interests that agitated the party. I was also frequently visited by the Prince and my connection with the Duke of Richmond gave me occasion to hear the opinions of the adverse party. I can only regret that these notes are so trif[f]ling and unconnected. Several circumstances render every remembrance of this time interesting. It offers a curious change of sentiments in many of the actors, tho' distinguish'd by characteristic traits—such as Mr. Burke's vehemence in his expressions about the King being as fully exhibited as it afterwards appear'd in his support of him. But whilst I read over with satisfaction the testimonies at that important moment in favour of the Duke and my Brother, I must lament the entire destruction of the Rockinghams, the Duke of Portland's dereliction from those original principles and original friends he seem'd so highly to value, and above all I read with concern those s[c]eeds of disunion in the opposition party which have since so fat[t]ally for itself and for the Country operated against it. And here too at the distance [of] 13 years I can trace that beginning of negligence and want of *ensemble* which together with the indulgence of imprudent language has destroy'd the importance of the opposition and in the present circumstances of danger to the country seems to shut out the assistance of Men of the first talents and integrity.

The Regency besides its own natural importance brought forward many of the present distinguished characters. The Duke of Bedford was very eager on the subject. Mr. Grey gave proof of his talents integrity and attachment to Mr. Fox and also of the imprudent warmth and eagerness that afterward[s] was the means of his being so shamefully misrepresented and misunderstood—and Sheridan not only gave convincing evidence of his talents but at the same time evinc'd the danger of his character. I do not mean to accuse him of any duplicity ; in fact He has stood the test of even poverty and I feel convinc'd of the honor of his political sentiments—but he cannot resist playing a sly game; he cannot resist the pleasure of acting alone, and this, added to his natural want of judgment and dislike of consultation frequently has made him commit his friends and himself. In short in the picture the following fragments offer of Society at the important moment of the Regency I think one may trace the source of many of the succeeding events. From hence is to be trac'd the facility with which the Prince yields to the pleasure of making himself agreeable to those with whom he happens to associate—his aptitude to yield over his better opinions to foolish, and even ridiculous counsellors if they happen to convince him, and the same facility that made

him promise places in the Regency, has since driven him into Society and Manners unworthy of him, for his talents are good, and his manner and deportment superior in grace to any thing I ever saw. And however he may have appear'd to deviate from strict honor, or to be capricious and unsteady, I cannot believe his heart to be bad—but he has obey'd the Star of the moment which has unfortunately been in a general Malignant. We can trace in these fragments, the Virtues and foibles of Mr. Fox, the comprehensive mind, undaunted genius, and unaba[i]ting kindness, which added to the most unaffected simplicity, constitute his Character, but we may also trace what has told alas[s] so much against him; a contempt for even necessary expedients, a great imprudence in conversation; and a fear, which in him is superior to every thing of seeming to yield what he thinks right to the bias of public opinion. The same sentiments that made him urge unnecessarily, the question of Right on the Regency have le[a]d in later times to the agitation of questions at that moment offensive. Can his character be better explained than by the example of the Duke of Norfolk's toast at the Whig Club, which Mr. Fox disapproved of, and it was the fashion for opposition to ridicule themselves for the folly of allowing the D of N to take the chair. Yet Mr. Fox the next meeting repeats the very words which had given offence in the D of Norfolk.

Whilst I have so long lamented, and often been provoked with his negligence, sometimes even to decent attention I must say that this kind of a carrage [*sic*] in a Man whose Idol was popularity is perhaps the greatest proof of the real greatness of his mind—and must give security of the sentiments he professes.

These fragments I think prepare to the disunion and want of method which so soon brought the destruction of opposition about during the years 92 and 93. Yet I have heard many of the errours of the party attributed to their not having met or previously consulted—and it will be apparent in these fragments that important as the question was, many of the subjects were brought before the house without previous consultation. Even during the King's illness, the Influence of the Court is apparent and, painful as at this distance of time (and when the infatuation of party has subsided), the King's dreadful calamity must appear and of course must excuse the kind of Influence made use of, to keep the Courtiers in activity yet I think it is evident now [that] this kind of power has increas'd—Mr. Pitt in his turn is its victim; and I must ever regret the loss of the Rockingham phalanx, who were ever ready to stem the advances of undue influence and to secure the Constitution on the basis established at the Revolution. For it appears to me that the overthrow of order from French principles, so far from giving rise to more power in the Crown ought to make us more jealous to keep our own within the limits, which alone have seem'd capable of binding and uniting the genius and sentiments of Englishmen.

I think the following journal offers two epochas. The first when there seem'd to be no doubt of the Prince's being Regent, and that the formation of a new administration occupied the minds and produced the circumstances

of rivalship and anxiety which attend a new Ministry. The second when the King's recovery revived the hopes of Mr. Pitt's friends, and when the opposition seem'd only to differ on the part the Prince and themselves were to take. The final blow was given on the [King's recovery], and for 13 years[1] the King's situation has thrown still greater power into Mr. P's hands.

At this distance of time and the effervescence and interest of the moment over, every memorial of the King's dreadful situation is affecting—but at the moment itself so much was it consider'd as the foundation of the hopes and fears of either party, that the horror of the circumstance seem'd to be lost in the contemplation of its consequences.

Tuesday the 2$^{d}$ of December 1788.

To make up Dearest M[other] for all my dabs of letters, I take the first leisure moment, to write extracts to you from a kind of incoherent journal I have kept ever since I came to town; and as I shall leave out all secrets or what I ought not to name, you may read it to my Uncle or any body who will not mention till it is settled, the Conferences with the Prince &ccc. After this my letters will be a regular newspaper.—Only read it to my Uncle[2] or L$^{y}$ [?] as it may get about.

1788.

At the end of October we heard the first accounts of the King's illness; we were at Chatsworth and we had letters from Lord Robert Spencer and Mr. Crawford. At the jubilee for the centenary of the Revolution we were at Chesterfield[3] and we heard the first reports of his insanity; which came from Newmarket; We went to Hardwicke and the reports were soon confirmed. The Duke of Portland wrote to the Duke of Devonshire pressing him to come to town, as he had none of his original political friends to consult with; As the Duke, tho' he wished much to go to Buxton, had written to promise him that he would come if he absolutely wish'd it; we set out for London upon another letter of the Duke of Portland's and got to town the 19 of November.

[1] This dates this preface as written in 1802.

[2] The Duke of Richmond.

[3] A full account of the Chesterfield celebration on November 5, King William's birthday, is given in the "Annual Register" for 1788, "Chronicle" (App.), p. 149. The stately procession that entered the town on Tuesday, November 4, was headed by the Duke of Devonshire. The Osbornes, Molyneuxes, etc., followed. There were members of eight Revolution Clubs, with flags, emblems, and mottoes. On November 5 at the "Crown and Anchor" in the Strand the Whig Club held a meeting, with the Duke of Portland in the chair. Sheridan made an eloquent address, and proposed the subscription for a statue to be erected in King William's honour on Romney Mead. The members subscribed £1,000; cf. *ibid.*, p. 220.

[The following letter from J. Crawford[1] to the Duchess, dated Friday, belongs probably to November 7.]

Friday. 5 o Clock.

My dr Duchess,

I can give you no just account of the King's disorder. Nobody can get at the truth but he is certainly very ill and dangerously ill. Doctor Warren was sent for on Wednesday night and is not yet come back. The Prince has been for two days together at Windsor, and is still there. The Chancellor was sent for yesterday while he was at dinner, and came back this morning. Why he was sent for or whether he saw the King, I don't know. The truth is, I believe, that the King is quite disordered in his mind. My own opinion from all the different accounts I have heard, is that the humour to which his whole family is subject, has fallen upon his brain, and that nothing will save him except an irruption upon his skin. I understand that the Prince has desired Charles to be sent for, which ought to be a secret, but is none, for I heard it at Brooks's. It is however certainly true; but nobody knows where Charles is; He was at Venice about a fortnight ago, and talked of going to Rome. Adieu.

Ever yours

J. CRAWFORD.

THE DIARY RESUMED.

Thursday the 20 of November.

We came to town upon a letter of the Duke of Portland's, Parliament adjourn'd for a fortnight. I heard y^e^ following acc^ts^ of the poor King's wretched situation—that the Queen has long been supposed to know it, and some of his attendants perceiv'd an alteration even in May last—he is in great awe of Dr. Warren and his madness is sometimes very touching and sometimes occasions his saying very clever things—such as saying the Prince of Wales was dead, so Women may be honest—&ccc— The Courtiers all affect to have been mad—Lord Fauconberg declares all the world saw him in a strait waistcoat and L^d^ Salisbury says the King has as much sence as he has.

The Prince behaves perfectly; without hurry—with temper, and kindness and attention to his poor Father and the Queen—he seems to incline to *our friends*. The Duke of Richmond openly declares for a joint Regency—Many instances given of the King's returning reason, one is a pun—his having said of C^l^ Manners—"there's *good Manners*."

[1] "Fish" Crawford, epicure, Whig-politician, art-patron, and a figure in society, belonged to the generation of Lord Spencer, the Duchess's father. He was also a friend of the Sheridans.

[Thursday] 20th of November.

[I heard the following account of the King's madness. The Queen is supposed to have known it in June and to have try'd to prevent his being much seen by his Ministers. Lord Lothian as early as May perceiv'd a change in his temper ; the foreign ministers especially Barthelémi perceiv'd it at the Levee, and on his return from thence he shew'd his backside to his attendants saying that he had not the gout. He pull'd off Sir George Baker's wig and made him go upon his knees to look at the star[r]s ; he begins by beating the palms of his hands, then crying and then howling ; he got naked out of Bed but C[l] Digby threatend him back.— As Dr. Warren had been the first who had been s[c]evere with him ; he often says "dont speak loud for Dr. Warren will hear you."

The Courtiers pretend it is nothing ; and it is a fashion amongst them to say that they have been all mad : Lord Fauconbridge declares every body must remember his strait waistcoat ; Mr. Robinson the same, and Lord Salisbury declares that the King has as much understanding as he has.

The proofs given of his returning sence are that he knew C[l] Manners and made a pun saying that is *good Manners ;* that he is attentive at prayers and more cleanly in his person : Burke says it is a strange way for Reason to revisit a man, in the shape of a pun.

The Prince of Wales behaves perfectly, seems in no hurry—but shews a strong inclination to our party which is carry'd on by secret interviews with Sheridan ; He seems to have entirely forgiven the Duke of Portland for having oppos'd the payment of his debts.

Sheridan who is heartily tired of [the] Hastings trial, and fearful of Burke's impetuosity says that he wishes Hastings would run away and Burke after him. Hervey Aston and Mr. Macnamara are to fight tomorrow on an Election quarrel ; the Westminster Election.[1]

The houses of parliament met only to adjourn for a fortnight. Lord

[1] In the preceding June Lord Hood's acceptance of a seat at the Admiralty Board had caused a vacancy. Lord John Townshend opposed him, and, contrary to general expectation, ousted the popular favourite after a fierce contest of fifteen days. Cf. Adolphus's "History of the Reign of George III.," Vol. IV., p. 32. When Elizabeth Sheridan came with her father to London at the close of July she found Mrs. Sheridan wearing and distributing Townshend's cockades. LeFanu MSS. The duel mentioned in the text was occasioned by the quarrels about this election, for Townshend was a "ne'er-do-weel" who had eloped with E. Fawkener's wife. "Hervey" cannot have been Lord Hervey, who was then in Italy, and no trace of the duel is to be found in the "Annual Register," or in contemporary memoirs occupied with the sensations of the King's health and the politics affected by it. Who Aston was, the writer is unable to ascertain, for it is highly improbable that the reference can be to Joseph Aston, a miscellaneous author. The other allusion remains obscure, but a Captain Macnamara (a noted duellist) was tried for manslaughter in 1803. Cf. "Life and Letters of the first Lord Minto," Vol. III., p. 314. There was also a Rear-Admiral James Macnamara, who afterwards served under Nelson.

Sidney had written to the Duke of St. Albans to attend. The Duke of Richmond talks openly for a joint Regency. The Prince has sent for Sheridan to meet him tomorrow at Bagshot.]

[November 20.]

[Burke says its an odd thing (in answer to their quoting the King's punning as a proof of reason) that it would be an odd thing, reason's revisiting a person in the Shape of a pun— the Duke of St Albans had a letter from L^d^ Sydney desiring him to attend— the Duke of Richmond openly argues for a joint Regency— The Prince this night has sent for Sheridan to meet him tomorrow at Bagshot.]

Friday 21st.

I had a kind message from the Prince. The D. of Richmond told us y^t^ the last time the King saw y^e^ Queen, he almost set her on fire by pushing the candle in her face to see [if] it was her.

Friday 21st Macnamara & Aston.[1]

[I received a message from y^e^ Prince thro Sheridan—nothing new—the King the same; the Duke of Richmond said his eyes had been so bad y^t^ before the Queen was oblig'd to leave him—he pushed y^e^ Candle in her face to see her.]

Saturday the 22^d^.

I went with y^e^ D^ss^ of Portland to enquire. She told me she had advis'd the D. of Portland not to be Minister, unless the proposal came absolutely from y^e^ Prince himself, as the Prince is suppos d to be still angry with the Duke of P. having oppos'd him about paying his debts. M^r^ Grey has an idea, but I believe a false one, that the King had taken quack medicines which had disordered him—there is also a report y^t^ he was suckled by a Woman who died mad.

22 Saturday Macnamara and Wellanger.[2]

[I went with the D^ss^ of Portland to enquire. She s^d^ she sh^d^ advise the Duke of Portland not to take any thing under the Prince who must have been angry with him, for opposing y^e^ payment of his debts in 86, unless the P asked him himself; the D^ss^ s^d^ the Prince had been very imprudent in driving his sisters and L^y^ Charlotte Finch about in a coach at Windsor

[1] This refers to the duel about the Westminster election already mentioned.

[2] ? Will Hanger, one of the Coleraines, brother perhaps to George Hanger, who was a great duellist. Hanger may have been a second to one of the parties.

and breaking the lamps—it was only giddyness and she should not have repeated [it]. The Duke of Bedford and Grey here of the Eve$^{g}$—the Duke of Bedford was vastly struck at the story of the King's telling S$^{r}$ L Pepys the Physician—Who the Devil sent for you? he s$^{d}$ the Prince—well then said [he], the Prince may pay you; for I won't pay you post chaise. Grey thinks, but erroneously, that the King's madness may be owing to quack Medicines he has taken to stem the Evil—especially Mendant's drops.]

Sunday the 23$^{d}$.

The idea of a new administration if the Prince is Regent is trying to be form'd on the true Rockingham principles—but much depends upon L$^{d}$ John's being Chancellor of the Exchequer. I find from Calonne[1] that in the City he is e[a]rnestly wish'd for. The early proofs the poor King gave of madness are these; at Cheltenham, he ran a race with a horse; and asked a Mr. Clements if he was the man who ran away with L$^{y}$ S. Bunbury[2] when he was in Love with her—at Windsor he told West the painter he w$^{d}$ teach him to mix Colours, and throwing some on the ground mixd y$^{m}$ with his foot—and he w$^{d}$ sit with the young women who embroidered, pretending to play on the fiddle, all this was before he was avowedly mad.

Sunday 23.

[I saw Grey & Sheridan. Sheridan might certainly be Chancellor of the Ex. if he chuses, but prefers reaching it by degrees and when he has prov'd his capability to y$^{e}$ public—he argued with Grey who would only accept the Chancellor of the Exchequer or Secretary of War. Grey says he will give way to L$^{d}$ John [Cavendish], Charles Fox or Sheridan—but not to those Norfol[c]ks Wyndhams and Pelhams. Sheridan wishes it to be a true Rockingham administration. Very anxious for the Duke to be something.]

Monday 24.

Nothing new—the King the same. M$^{r}$ Fox arriv'd—after 8 days from Bologna—when the express came to him there, he had just heard that his poor little Nephew L$^{d}$ H was dead[3]—he was very sorry for the boy—and saw all his parliamentary hopes destroy'd by being remov'd to y$^{e}$ upper house—they told him an express was come—he s$^{d}$ its my poor Nephew's death—when Jim Hone ran up and told him y$^{t}$ it was an Express to return as the King was dying—what a revolution in a man's Ideas! Sheridan

[1] Charles Alexandre Calonne, after convening the assembly of notables in 1787, retired to England, where he was fêted by the Whig Society.

[2] Afterwards Lady Sarah Napier—the King's flame before he married the Queen.

[3] This was of course an unfounded report, and Lord Holland lived to be the legatee of Fox's anti-Sheridanism.

sup[p']d with us—M[r] Fox was tir'd and c[d] not come—in bed—grown very thin and liked peoples talking to him to avoid thinking which puzzled him.

Monday 24th.

[Charles Fox is arrived, and much fatigu'd as he was only 8 days from Bologna—he had heard y[t] his nephew L[d] Holland was dead and was lamenting the loss of the child as he loves him very much, and likewise was grieving at his political views being stop[p]'d by his removal to the H of Lords; when they told him an express was waiting for him at Lausanne—the express soon came and he found it the news of the King's illness and a summons for him—a great revolution in a Man's ideas was this! M[r] Fox is tir'd and grown very thin.]

Tuesday 25th.

Saw Sheridan a minute. Jack Payne[1] came to town saw Charles who is to go tomorrow. M[r] Pitt has insisted on the King's being seen by D[r] Addington his family Physician.

Tuesday the 25th.

[M[r] Pitt has insisted on the King's being seen by D[r] Addington, his own fami[l]y Physician.]

Wednesday—26th.

The Prince and Duke of York saw Charles and Sheridan at S[t] Anne's—he desir'd them to shake hands from him with y[e] D of P(ortland) [and the] D. of Y(ork) [with] heartyness. [The] Prince s[d] we will pretend to trust the D of Gloucester and tell him nothing. [The] Prince wrote me a kind letter by Sheridan—it is resolv'd he sh[d] send for all the privy Council and tell them to take charge of the King—and move him on Saturday.

[1] Sir John Willett Payne was now thirty-six years of age and the Prince's secretary and keeper of his papers. He played a considerable part as go-between in this crisis. He had served in the American War and was M.P. for Huntingdon. Afterwards he fought in the war of the French Revolution till 1798. He was made rear-admiral in the following year. He figured largely in society. In 1803 he was appointed treasurer of Greenwich Hospital. For some years he had been in failing health, and the year of this appointment was that of his death. Readers of the writer's "Emma, Lady Hamilton," will remember the part he is said to have played at the outset of her life. The Duchess of Devonshire had no high opinion of his talents. In the Sheridan MSS. also are many allusions in 1788 to his messages about the King's madness at this time. Erskine wrote the following distich upon him:

"'Tis true I am ill, but I need not complain,
For he never knew pleasure who never knew Payne."

There is also a long obituary of him in the "Annual Register" for 1803.

Wednesday the 24th. [Slip for 26th.]

[The Prince and Duke of York, who joins and acts with him, saw Charles Fox, and behav'd amazingly well; the Prince has sent a very kind message to the D of Portland, entirely cancelling all former discontents.—The Prince has summon'd all the Cabinet, that they may verify the King's situation and take charge of him.]

Thursday the 25th. [Slip for 27th.]

The poor King engaged a page to pretend sleep, because he s$^{d}$ then he c$^{d}$ sleep; and immediately picked his pockets—it is supposd in search of keys to find his money to bribe them to let him escape. I saw M$^{r}$ Payne; the King had taken y$^{e}$ Duke of York's regiment from him and given it to y$^{e}$ Duke of Richmond.

Thursday—27.

. . . [King's pretending to sleep. Sheridan I saw at Burlington House and then at home—he is teaz'd by Grey Fitzpatrick and L$^{d}$ John Towns[h]end and sore on the subject [of] M$^{rs}$ Fitzherbert's difficulty in being reconcil'd to Fox. I saw Jack Payne—the King had taken the D. of York's regiment from [him] and given it y$^{e}$ D of Richmond, because he s$^{d}$ the D. of York had taken [the] tongs and pokers out of his room. Joke about Jack Robinson.]

Friday 28.

The difficulty in new administration, persuading L$^{d}$ John [Cavendish] to be Chancellor of y$^{e}$ Exchequer. Carte blanche offer'd y$^{e}$ Duke [of Devonshire]—he won't accept of any thing—in the Eve$^{g}$ Sher[idan], Fitz[patrick], Grey—Cal [*i.e.*, Calonne], Crawfurd—the attack upon Sheridan by Jack Towns[h]end—Fitz—Grey about Burke. Charles a little and Sheridan less. Kemble and East laugh at Foxes speaking and the others at Sheri's.

Friday 26. [Slip for 28.]

[The Prince sent his Messages to the Cabinet assembled by the D. of York. M$^{r}$ Pitt saw the King and was much affected the King raves about 1200 he says he lent him. The difficulty in the new administration still hangs on L$^{d}$ John's not accepting the Exchequer. Carte blanche has been offer'd the D. of Devonshire but he refuses every thing.]

Saturday the 27. [Slip for 29.]

The King was remov'd to Kew; bore his journey very well but is as mad as ever, for he order'd a tye wig and danc'd with D$^{r}$ Reynolds.

Sunday 28. [Slip for 30.]

The King has been very violent and tore a Page terribly.

I saw Mr. Fox at M^rs^ Bouverie's, he is and looks very ill.

The Prince and Duke of York were last night at the D of Portland's and behav'd in the kindest manner.

Sheridan came in from Carlton House at M^rs^ Bouverie's and told us that the Chancellor [Thurlow] was so affected to day at seeing the King y^t^ he had a violent hysteric; and this is confirm'd.

Sunday. [November 30]

I went out of Town—on my return from Clacton go to M^rs^ Bouverie's. Fox, Grey, Fitz, Grenville, John [her brother George John, second Earl Spencer[1]], and Fred [North], L^d^ John. The King accuses M^r^ Pitt of owing him 1200£, and M^r^ P much affected at his state—, he is removd to Kew—orders a tye wig and dances a minuet with his Apothecary. The K—— tears two of his attendants almost to pieces. Sheridan came in from Carlton House where he is to sup, and told us y^e^ King is so ill, he was held down by force, and y^t^ the Chancellor was in Hysterics, Prince and Duke of York just came with this acc^t^.

Charles Fox told us, y^e^ express which reach'd him at Florence, mentioned the King's insanity—but at Lyons he heard and believ'd his death; near Paris in y^e^ dark, at a post he heard from a chaise some bad french and supposing an Englishman, asked the news and heard he [*i.e.*, the King] was y^e^ same—his anxiety now was to know who the Prince had sent to—and at Paris Coutts the Banker told him y^e^ P had seen Sheridan, and eas'd all his doubts. Fox far from well.

Monday

I saw Dr. Warren, who says the Bulletins are order'd to be obscure; he says the King *may* recover but he does not think it.

I shall take up my journal at Monday tomorrow. D^st^ M—, there is nothing very new today and tomorrow we shall know.

God bless you D^st^ M, my babys are quite quite well.

Monday December the 1st

[I saw L^d^ John at the Duke of Portland's and had rather hopes from his looks— I saw Dr. Warren who told me the acc^ts^ were purposely obscure.

When the Prince saw the D. of Portland on Saturday last he was accompany'd by the D of York, who testifys the greatest love to him (the Prince) and joins him in all his political sentiments— Sheridan is deservedly high in the Prince's favour.

[1] He joined Pitt in 1794.

1st Dec. Monday

I saw L$^{d}$ John—and Dr Warren who says these acc$^{ts}$ are made as obscure as possible and purposely. he says the King may certainly recover—but he doubts it. When the Prince saw the Duke of Portland, the D. of York accompany'd him and united with him. Sheridan says the Duke of York is entirely detached from L$^{y}$ Tyrconnel.[1] Private discussions go on; and Sheridan keeps his hold with the Prince. Grey still determin'd to be nothing unless Sheridan Fox or L$^{d}$ John are C of the E.]

Tuesday, the 2$^{d}$

The Prince, L$^{d}$ Brudenel as privy purse, and the Chancellor went to Windsor to look for some private Jewels and money of the King's which was missing—they found the Jewels hid in a place so near the Window y$^{t}$ they might have been taken away. There was a meeting this Eve$^{g}$ at Carlton House at which were Present The Duke of York, the Dukes of Devonshire and Portland, Mr. Grey, Mr. Sheridan L$^{d}$ Loughboro[ugh] Lord Stormont L$^{d}$ North &c, Mr. Fox was not well enough to be there. The Prince spoke very well and told them a Conversation that had pass'd between him and Pitt about the first adjournment.

Tuesday 2 Dec$^{r}$

[The Prince went to Windsor as there had been a difficulty in finding the Jewels and Privy Purse—the Jewels found at last in a place near the window—the Prince and D of York in presence of the Chancelor, L$^{d}$ Brudenel, &cc seal'd them up—The Queen who is wonderfully fond of Jewels, flew in an outrageous passion, reproach'd them, abus'd them, and they remonstrated, and at last got the better—Mrs. Egerton and L$^{y}$ Courtown who heard from y$^{e}$ next room entreated the Princes not to notice or mention this. The Prince return'd and had a meeting at Carlton House—The Dukes of P. and Devonshire, L$^{d}$ North, Stormont Grey, Sheridan, L$^{d}$ Loughboro' &ccc—Poor Charles is too ill in bed to be able to go—The Prince spoke very well; and related a conversation some time back between him and Pitt— Pitt said he hop'd y$^{e}$ gentlemen of y$^{e}$ other side w$^{d}$ not oppose the first adjournment, the P answerd, indeed Mr. Pitt you must know more about the House of C than I can— ; [several lines carefully erased] Sheridan and Grey sup[p]ed here—the Duke of Devonshire is desird by the P. to call on him on Thursday. They talk of entrusting the King to a Dr. Willis a Clergyman who is us'd to the care of Madmen and treats them with kindness even keeping a pack of hounds for them and allowing y$^{m}$ to hunt and shoot. L$^{d}$ John says accepting [*i.e.*, the Chancellorship of Exchequer] will kill him; and peevishly mention'd my interference.]

[1] He had not long before been furious over a supposed rudeness to her at a Pantheon masquerado; cf. "Life and Letters of the first Lord Minto."

Wednesday Dec 3d

A general Council — of all ye privy Counsellours — the Physicians examin'd, and Dr. Addington declares all mad people in general recover, this is supposd to be a puff of his own treatment— Warren said, that they oftener recover'd yn not, but then he strangely added that he reckon'd every relapse they might have as a seperate [*sic*] disease and recovery— So as Charles Fox observ'd take 7 mad men, 6 don't recover but the 7th is mad 7 times and recovers each time, the Majority is in favour of the Mad men who recover. All this is to be laid before parliament and Warren's journal will be ask'd for— The Prince was not well to night and was blooded— The Duke of Cumberland sd Well I shall go home and eat no supper tonight; or breakfast tomorrow yt my head may be quite free, for business—and he ask'd Ld Clermont, Well Clermont you will be busy enough tomorrow, and Ld Clermont said yes Sir I shall be in ye house of Commons and then in the house of Lords, the D of Cumberland sd aptly enough, take up yr abode in the court of requests and yn you will be between both.

The King was so mad tonight that he pull'd off his page's wig and made him fetch and carry it.

Thursday Night 4th Decr.

The Parliament met[1]—the Physicians report was laid before both houses yt it was probable the King might recover—and there was a dispute in the house of Commons whether or no there shd be a discussion on his state. I saw the Prince this Eveg—he told me he should absolutely refuse any *limited* Regency so they might do as they will—he shew'd me a letter from the queen, very kind, calling him her Dr Son, and telling him the King was more Calm by the Physicians acct—he intends to call on D of D [evonshire] tomorrow to press his taking something. I saw Grey this morning who is I think a [several words erased—? angry] but he refuses the treasury.

King about Ly Pembroke—always calls her Ly E. Spencer.

The Prince praised Sheridan very much, and said he has play'd his cards well, for he has devoted himself to a man who is not insensible to his merits. He sd, Mrs. Fitz shd be as happy as he cd make her, but shd have no rank— A meeting at ye D of York's before the House—Prince at Brookes's.

5th Friday.

Nothing particular, the Prince was to have come to press the D. of D. to be privy seal but he was oblig'd to go to Kew. Dr. Willis called in to the King—the Bishop of Peterboro' saw him as he went down to Kew. What the K said to the Chancellor which affected the C so much, was, you shall dine with me, but perhaps I shall not give you a good dinner—I have not so much power as I used to have. Charles Fox very ill—feuds between Grey and Sheridan, worse yn ever. Ld Camden's speech the D. of Rich [mond].

[1] To examine the physicians' reports in Committee.

end of Friday the 5th.

There was a meeting at Burlington House, where the propriety of a parliamentary discussion into the King's state was examin'd. Sheridan and Burke for it—Charles rather ag$^{st}$ it and Ld Loughboro' quite ag$^{st}$ it. Charles Fox was so ill, y$^{t}$ he almost thought he was dying.

Saturday 6th.

There were many reports this m$^{g}$ that D$^{r}$ Willis thought he could cure the King—that when he went in the King oppos'd him but at last was so much subdued by the sight of a Strait waistcoat y$^{t}$ he was permitted to shave himself and cut his nails—it was also reported that the Chancellor had left us and that Pitt (who had an audience of y$^{e}$ Queen) was gone to offer her the Regency. The truth is that the King is very bad, only that D$^{r}$ Willis has frighten'd him. The Prince sent the D. of York to the Queen to try to know by fair means the subject of the conversation with Pitt and if she would not to tell her, y$^{t}$ none of the house of Brunswick w$^{d}$ ever join with her interviews with Pitt—this interview was of no consequence—only to talk to the Queen about the care of the King's person. With regard to D$^{r}$ Willis he certainly has been talking to Charles Monson and others of the probability of Restoring the King but he is a boasting sanguine man and violently [in] with administration—however it was necessary to manage him before our plan of operation was laid, and Sheridan has been to night with Warren, who answers for it y$^{t}$ Willis's account will tomorrow coincide with theirs. Y$^{e}$ King wanted S$^{r}$ George Baker to have y$^{e}$ waistcoat on, and calls Warren S$^{r}$ Richard Rascal.

There was a meeting at Ch Foxes—y$^{e}$ P. & D. of York came there. M$^{rs}$ Bouverie was with Charles when the first people came L$^{d}$ North L$^{d}$ Lough. and went into y$^{e}$ next room.

Charles is much better to day.

Sunday 7th Dec$^{r}$

The King had a bad Night—D$^{r}$ Willis permitted him to write to the Queen and receive her answer which drove him quite mad so as to knock his head ag$^{st}$ the wall &cc. Burke says the Q has but one Virtue and one vice—Virtue, decorum, Vice, Avarice; in the c[ase] of M$^{rs}$ Hastings Avarice got the better. The Chancellor is now suppos'd by some to be against us, and side with Pitt—many think we shall carry the adjournment or any question. The arm'd neutrality[1] are with us.

[1] So called from the name given to the Northern League in 1780. It consisted of Shelburneites and a quota of the Northites, and at times included the Duke of Richmond. For the "Middle party," cf. *post* under date, "Tuesday, Dec. 17."

Monday 8th

Ill in bed all day. The Duke told me the Prince call'd on him, and told him he w^d not press him to accept of a place, tho' he should have looked on it as an honour and advantage to the party not only as a man he lov'd but one of y^e most respectable in the nation—but he beg[g']d him to accept of a place perhaps hereafter. He told him a great secret y^t when Sheridan went to the Chanc[ellor] the Chancellor s^d to M^r Sheridan I am of no party and to a man of your discernment that is saying enough. D^r Moore tells me Pitt means to go out with Eclat, to prove to the people he did not try to stay in and only to limit the P. in patent places and peerages as they might limit y^e K's authority should he recover—but not as to the Dissolution of P——t

There was a meeting at Burlington House—and a quarrel at Brookes's between Grey and Fitzpatrick. Fitz had seem'd to agree with Grey, because he s^d a man [erased] about the P ought to be consulted &cc [but] was not to be trusted. [? *i.e.*, Sheridan.]

Tuesday 9.

The King slept seven hours last Night and is rather better to day they are so illated [*sic*] at Lady Salisbury's that they say he will be quite well and will [go] down to the House on Thursday the Fact I believe is that he is entirely subdued by Doctor Willis who knows how to mannage mad people ; there is a report to day that M^r Pit[t] means to hasten measures whilst there is this appearance of amendment in the King in hopes of securing a Majority for the limitations. The Duke of Richmond has wrote to the prince to exculpate himself from having said that there ought to be no sole regent the Comittee have already sat seven hours and have not got through doctor Warren yet Grey is quite reconciled to Sheridan and he will take any place that 3 of his friends will advise him to.

Sheridan has been here to night and given us an acc^t of the comittee—Warren's examination tended to the King's not recovering—; and Willis who is a fierce looking man with a commanding eye by which he manages his Madness said if he was not King—he sh^d have no doubt, and he spoke this sentiment too, to L^d Cadogan in y^e house of Lords. Sheridan wish'd the various classes of Madmen to be distinguished—when the Physicians talked of the Majority of Mad men recovering he wish[ed] them to devide [*sic*] [them] in Classes, Mad men from fevers, blows, affections of the mind—madmen from no assignable cause; for as the King is the last, a Majority of the former cannot operate as a Majority in the Class in which he is. Pitt oppos'd this.

Wednesday 10th Dec^r[1]

A better acc^t of the King—and Grey who was at L^y Salisbury's says they are all in very great Spirits, and say he must recover.

[1] The day on which the physicians presented their reports, and on which Pitt moved for a Committee in the House of Commons.

When G^e Grenville heard y^e King was dying he said then there is perdition four deep—meaning y^t y^e Prince of Wales, Duke of York, P W^m and P Edward were all with us. In the house of commons to day after the report of the Comittee was given, Mr. Pitt mov'd for a Comittee to search into precedents. Mr Fox s^d it was unnecessary for the Prince was regent of right, and y^t it was only delaying. Mr Pitt call'd this treason to the constitution—y^t the Prince whatever discretionary powers parliament might give him, was only first subject and y^t these were not accordant principles with Mr [*sic*] Somers's on the revolution. Mr. Fox reply'd —and s^d y^t Mr Pitt forgot what Parliament was, y^t the 2 houses were only a part of it, and the King wanting to complete the whole, and y^e difference of circumstances did away the appearance of anti-revolution principles. Mr. Burke attack'd Mr. Pitt as a competitor for the Regency. Pitt was so angry y^t when he was to name the comittee of enquiry he s^d: I can't name Mr Burke—however he did when he came to the 21^st name.

This discussion has had I think a bad effect tho' we say we are glad of it. Pitt and Charles both blam'd for bringing it on. Marsham and the Country gentlemen are to be ag^st us on it. I think Grey and Sheridan, tho' resolv'd to go thro' with Fox, are in their hearts ag^st it. Sheridan when he got into the carriage [said] to Fox, well I suppose he has some little right —has not he?—at Richmond House L^d Sidney said Fox had retracted.

Thursday 11 debate H of L^ds [1]

The King the same—a report y^t he had walk'd in the garden—I saw the Prince—he talk'd very kindly of Grey. They think L^d George Lennox will vote with us. A Repetition of Yesterday in the house of Lords. L^d Camden movd a Comittee of searching pressidents. L^d Loughboro' spoke as to y^e right, and L^d Thurlow who had been closetted with the Prince— against it—complimenting the P but calling it a new doctrine to him. L^d Stormont spoke well. Sheridan seems out of spirits and I fear much some little Bickerings between Fox and him and perhaps misrepresentations of what Sheridan previously did.

Sheridan and Grey resolv'd to go thro' with Foxes principle of right but in their hearts don't quite agree and are sorry its come on. Sheridan very sorry that things are put out of y^e course he put y^m in especially y^t the Chancellor is not enough courted, and y^t L^d Lough is to have y^e Seals.[2] The D of Norfolk wants to be privy seal.

[1] On moving for a Committee.

[2] In both the matters above mentioned Sheridan's judgment was right and Fox's was at fault. Sheridan wished to propitiate Thurlow, and this incensed Fox after his rebuke (cf. Fox's Corr.). Sheridan was dead against Fox's pressing the Prince's claim as one of constitutional *right:* he foresaw the consequences of such a measure to the country, and this Diary proves that historians have hitherto been mistaken in assuming that Sheridan was hot in urging the question. Sheridan's previous insistence on discussing the state of the King's health in the House of Commons was justified as a piece of party tactics.

Friday December the 12.

Different opinions, uneasiness &ccc at what has past concerning the Right in both houses. My Brother tells me L^d^ Stormont's speech was very ingenious and good. Charles Fox and Pitt were of each side the woolsack, and Charles nodded to Pitt when any argument came home. My B^r^ says he admires M^r^ Fox, for thus taking the Bull by the horns and thinks it a fine trait in his Character, but fears it was an unfortunate measure, both as to its effect in the houses and in the Country—and especially as it seems now as if we were imbibing Tory principles. He says Pitt affects almost republican sentiments all at once.

The King much better, walk'd two miles in his garden and asked young Willis to walk with him—this represented as a proof of sence, but in fact, as Warren told L^y^ Melbourn, a proof of mad cunning, as he hates the Father to get the Son over to him—he asked young Willis to kick his Father out of the room.

A great debate in the house of Commons.[1] M^r^ Fox s^d^ he was come to do what he had never done before, answer misrepresentations he found had been made in another place of his speech—that he certainly meant that the Prince had a right to be Regent, but not to assume the Regency. He however prov'd how improper such discussions were now, but urg'd M^r^ Pitt to tell candidly what he meant to do &cc.

M^r^ Pitt said the house sh^d^ go into a comittee on the State of the nation, examine into the Right, and then give the Regency to the Prince, with all the powers necessary to the full exertion of Sovereignty as far as concern'd despatch of Business authority &cc but no power that did not belong to this. M^r^ Fox said all powers y^t^ were not of use to the exercise of his situation were so trifli[y]ing they need scarcely be mention'd. M^r^ Pitt having said the Prince's power was only a trust—M^r^ Fox launch[ed] out into fine Whig principles, that the Kings' and all Kings' powers were only trusts. Sheridan rather got into a scrape by trying to bring about the previous question and to do away y^e^ question of right, said something of their running the risk of *provoking a claim*, this was taken as a threat and as he told us there was a buz at him and somebody s^d^ we won't be threaten'd.

Great disturbances in the arrangements The Prince has promis'd L^d^ Sandwich to the 1^st^ L^d^ of y^e^ Admiralty and both the Duke of Portland and Charles refuse to have any thing to do with it in y^t^ case. Sheridan gone to persuade the Prince about this.

The King play'd at drafts which the sanguine Courtiers call playing at Chess. When Sheridan attack[ed] Charles for bring[ing] on debate on *Right*, Charles s^d^ its better always to take y^e^ Bull by the horns. Sheridan

[1] On the Report to the House, Fox said that the Prince had the *right* but not the possession. A summary of his speech appears in Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 330. On this occasion Sheridan deprecated all discussion of the Prince's rights; cf. *ibid.*, p. 331.

s^d yes but you need not have drove him into the room that you might take him by y^e horns.

Friday December the 12th.

[The King not so well to day. I saw Sheridan who tells me y^t the Prince has given up L^d Sandwich in the handsomest way in the world—, and he shew'd me a letter of Charles Fox's about the Chancellor giving up L^d Loughboro's appointment, immediate[ly] but very very reluctantly. Sheridan calld at five, to say L^d Sandwich had behav'd very well. I hear great abuse of the imprudence of Sheridan's speech last night—I know nothing of to night but suspect something of consequence as Sheridan did not call here—and Fitzpatrick seem'd to hint something of consequence was going on.]

Sunday 14th.

D of Rich. who was w^th Lady Eliz^th [Foster] was in great spirits as they think they will beat us in the previous question and of course in the other—he said Pitt had caught us on the hook and would keep us to it. I saw Sheridan—he was with the Chancellor till 3 from 10 last night. He carry'd him a written proposal from Charles to the Chancellor, but he thinks the application rather late as the Chancellor has pledged himself to support y^e limitations—he however at last promis'd to speak for the previous question on Monday. Sheridan says he left him with the impression of his being a great rogue—he try'd to sound Sheridan on the plan of his undermining Fox—he told Sheridan one limitation w^d be the household to be continued under y^e Queen for Six months nor c^d this he s^d signify, y^e Queen and Prince being so well together. Sheridan reminded him then of the quarrel about y^e Diamonds, and the Chan: ownd the Qu was a termagant; he s^d if the P. refusd y^e Regency they must have Lords Justices. Sheridan s^d, but what may become of y^r head, when he is King. he s^d, you may hang the Chancellor but you can't alter the Law—he however came over at last. Sheridan is rather now for the Prince's accepting with the limitation of peerages and L^ds of y^e Bedchamber remaining for 6 months. Charles Fox very much ag^st it—great embarrassment. Sheridan told y^e Chancellor they had had thoughts of employing me to persuade them. He s^d she w^d have been a powerful indeed almost irresistable advocate. I saw D^r Warren—he blames D^r Willis's imprudence who let the Queen come to the King last night—he was tollerable at 1^st, but got quite wild—proposed marriage between a keeper and M^me Swelingberg [Schwellenberg]—the Queen fainted and the King had y^e waistcoat on for y^e 1^st time. He askd Willis why as a Clergyman he practis'd Physick, Willis s^d, our Saviour had done the same, the King s^d, yes but He had not 600 a year in the Church.

The D. of York and Gloucester to speak tomorrow—a meeting at Burlington House only 120 opposition.

Monday the 15.

The King rather better, D[r] Willis had been so imprudent as to let him have his little girl Princess Emily and he would not give her up but kept her tight in his arms, till they brought the Queen to him. The house of L[ds] began by L[d] Fitzwilliam speaking ag[st] the discussing of the question of the Right[1] the Duke of York spoke next to the same purpose and spoke extremely well. Lord Stormont and the Duke of Gloucester spoke for us and the Chancellor, against all our expectations, against us. Lord Sydney calld Lord Stormont to Order for making use of the word unparliamentary and he Lord Sydney was in his turn call'd to Order which put him in so great a passion that he challenged the whole house to call upon him as Gentlemen lord Rawdon answered them with great spirit and propriety Lord Stanhope was very desirous to take down the Duke of York's speech and took Sheridan out to beg him to correct his notes of it which he of course refused to do.

I find the prince is not willing to give up hopes of the Chancellor. Charles Fox is very happy that he has declared against us there are great suspicions of the Queen taking a strong part.

Monday 15.

[L[d] Fitz's motion. D[ukes] of Y[ork] and Gloucester.]

Tuesday the 17th. [Slip for 16th.]

The great report that the City mean to give a pension of three thousand a year to M[r] Pitt if he is turned out. I saw the prince, who seem'd in good spirits though much agitated. We waited with good anxiety all the Evening to hear News, the accounts the Duke of Portland and Lord George said were favorable, but Mr. Grey who wrote us three notes was certain we sh[d] lose it from y[e] 1[st]. At 3 my B[r] and y[e] D of Bedford brought us word it was lost by 64. Pitt spoke proposing 3 resolutions, 1[st] y[e] 6[d] . . . the 2[d] . . . and the 3[d], delegating power to parliament to order the great seal to be affixed and pass an act of p[t][2] this threw y[e] arm'd Neutrality[3] into

[1] He apologised for "introducing a conversation where he did not intend to make a motion." The House of Lords was crowded with strangers to hear the Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who on this occasion uttered his famous "When I forget my King, may my God forget me!" Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 332.

[2] Pitt's resolutions were to the effect, first, that the King was by his present indisposition prevented from attending personally to public business; second, it was the right and duty of the Lords and Commons to provide for this deficiency in the legislature according to the exigency of the case; third, that the two Houses should determine on the means by which the royal assent might be given to Bills respecting the exercise of the powers and authorities of the Crown during the King's indisposition. Cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 334.

[3] The "Middle Party," which deprecated any discussion of "right." Lord North and Mr. Bastard were strongly in favour of this course. For the sobriquet of "Armed Neutrality," cf. *ante*, under date "Sunday, Dec. 7."

confusion, and Bastard made a speech hurtful to us for tho' he was for y^e^ previous question he s^d^ he was of no party and thought Pitt more popular y^n^ Fox. L^d^ North a very fine speech. Fox, a Glorious one, saying y^t^ Pitt's conduct was y^t^ of an ambitious Man wishing to distress his Successor. Pitt made a fine showy answer—and call'd on y^e^ House why it sh^d^ be suppos'd he was to go out—had he not been a good minister—might he not hope for y^e^ Prince's favour—debate grew very very dull.[1]

The Prince had had a letter from Pitt in y^e^ morning—he s^d^ an impertinent one—and one from y^e^ Queen begging her name might not be mentiond.

Wednesday, 17.

The Prince very much hurt but behaves well. Sheridan is to see the Chancellor—but has no hopes from him. The Duke of York very stout and talks of civil war.

Thursday, 18.

Ill in bed, hear no news but that Sheridan has had a meeting with L^d^ Rawdon and y^e^ Duke of Northumberland and the arm'd neutrality will go with us on limitations and all questions. Sheridan met Warren here at Night and wrote a letter to y^e^ Chancellor.

Friday. 19.

Sheridan tells me y^t^ all will go well, that the Prince must accept if he finds they mean to offer it to the Queen, and refuse boldly if they make L^ds^ Justices. He is for accepting with Limitations and y^n^ get rid of y^m^, Fox and y^e^ D of Portland ag^st^, but he thinks will come round. L^d^ North come round.

House of Commons adjourn'd by desire of the Country Gentlemen—good complexion of the house for us.

D^r^ Warren told me, the Chancellor c^d^ not decide, he wish'd he would—had seen the King, in good humour but quite mad.

Saturday. 20.

Nothing new. Fox was angry yesterday with Sheridan for letting some of our friends go out of town upon the idea of there being no debate afterwards; Charles made him excuses for having snub[b]'d him and Sheridan s^d^ quite as to a child—pooh pooh be as cross as you will.

[1] All this occurred on the 16th, when the Committee on the State of the Nation received the reports of old precedents in Latin and French. This is what made Sheridan say afterwards that the Committee had resulted in nothing but "a little bad Latin and worse French." Fox vehemently repeated the Prince's right to claim a regency. The ministers won by a majority of 268 to 204. The two next days were occupied in debating the motion that the Report of the Committee should be brought up. Mr. Dempster unsuccessfully attempted to expunge the word "right." Sheridan acted in the spirit of the "Middle Party."

Charles is always imprudent,—he is very partial to the D of York who is remarkably honest and open. Charles had s^d something before Turton which they thought seem'd as if he gave the pref[f]erence to the D of York over y^e Prince—he s^d, oh I am y^e most prudent man alive—and s^d he never w^d mention it again; the next day pulling up his stock and shaving himself, he s^d before a whole room full—"the Duke of York for my money."

Sunday 21 Dec.

No news. Grey thinks Sheridan has been gaining the Arm'd Neutrality by talking other sentiments y^n Foxes. The Duke of Rich[mond] told Bess [Lady Elizabeth Foster] that Sheridan and Fox were ill together.

Poor Sheridan at home all day. Tickel[l] told me studying precedents &cc—Henry y^e 6^th a whole Pile of [them]—: The Duke of Y and P of W with him and S^r J Sinclair for 2 hours—a meeting at Burlington House. Burke reccomended taking care of the county towns particularly.

Monday 22^d Dec.

Saw Sheridan at M^rs Sheridan's—he s^d he hop'd all was going well; that he sh^d not speak, he was ill and had been interrupted by the Duke of York who had been with him y^e day before and prevented his studying. It is said that the Prince sent to ask Pitt what his intentions w[h]ere and his plan. Pitt said he could not answer till he knew if he should have y^e good fortune to carry the next question. We waited anxiously for the event of the debate, we had good hopes—Burke L^d North and Fox spoke very finely.[1] Burke quoted Macbeth[2]—ran off a little. We were beat however by 93.[3] Sheridan's speech was reckon'd imprudent. Some of our friends are out of town and all L^d Londsdale's people (10) kept away the Duke of York call'd upon L^d Londsdale and they told him he was asleep.

Tuesday 23^d

I find people think it is wrong in the P and D of York to canvass so much —there was a house of Lords and Confer[r]ence,[4] L^d Loughboro' spoke well.

[1] Burke indulged in violent abuse of Lord Thurlow, who was supposed to be intended to join in a Regency with the Queen, if the Prince refused the limitations intended by Pitt. "We are told," he said, "to take a man with a large black brow and a big wig. . . . I have given my allegiance already to the House of Hanover. I worship the gods of our glorious Constitution, but I will not worship Priapus." Lord North quoted "Scriblerus." Fox only recapitulated his former opinions; cf. Adolphus, Vol. IV., pp. 336, 337.

[2] "Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding."

[3] 271 to 178.

[4] Conference debate in the House of Lords, in which Lord Rawdon stoutly championed the Prince's "rights."

The Duke of Richmond told Calonne they might be embarrass'd with too much success. Dr Willis on Tuesday tho' he knew the K. was in a strait waistcoat, sent an express to Pitt which was to have found him at the house saying ye K was better and wd recover for Willis is a great Pittite and thought it might influence the division. Warren reproached him with this and he own'd it. Warren said he disgrac'd his former character a Clergymans and his present one a Physician by becoming a political note writer.

The Prince very much out of spirits. Sr John Sinclair alarms him very much by saying they mean to attack him about Mrs Fitz. on the act preventing the Sovereign marrying a R C—and Sheridan says the Mg Post will be got over. The Queen forbid Dr. Baker attending Princess Rl for saying the K. was mad [on] the 22d

Wednesday 24.

I hear no particular news— Sheridan thinks Sir John St Claire's Scheme a good one—they say Pitt means the Prince shd be the phantom; the power to be appointed to affix the great seal to be ye P[rince's ?]—he probably will refuse it—a report in the City yt Pitt and Fox wd Coalesce. Ld Loughboro' angry with Sheridan but pacify'd.

Thursday 25.

Sheridan now here from Burlington House—they had sent him to fetch Charles Fox. They were all in a great Bustle for the Queen has order'd the Prince to have no conference with ye Physician or to be answer'd any question about the Ks health.

Friday. 26 Decr

The Chancellor quite off—spoke in terms civil of the Prince but off—a house of Lords—Ld Rawdon,[1] Loughboro', Stormont, Porchester, Carlisle, for us— the Chancellor against—praisd ye Prince but abus'd his advisers— Ld Landsdown[2] agst—said, the People have rights—Kings and Princes have none. Dull debate.[3]

The Duke of York taken ill and blooded—but return'd to the house. The Duke of Gloucester shabbily staid away—beat by 30— Bath Bristol and Northampton were try'd for addresses to Pitt—but they have fail'd.—Ld Abingdon stirr'd at the Princes Marriage—and the Protestant succession.

Saturday. 27th Dec.

Charles Fox ask'd Grey to speak on Tuesday and open the debate—din'd at Crawford's, the Prince of Wales din'd there partial still to the Chancellor —the Duke of Rich. calls Jack Payne a *little monkey*. The King is tied down in his bed.

[1] Afterwards Moira.
[2] It is not alluded to by Adolphus.
[3] Lord Shelburne.

Sunday. 28.

The King much better, talk'd of Charles Foxes illness, ask'd who was his Physician—Turton—I'm sorry for it he s$^{d}$, for he will put his Courtiers in great Spirits.

Saw Sheridan— L$^{d}$ Loughboro', pleas'd, is to be chancellor, L$^{d}$ Fitzwilliam will do as they wish him— My Brother refus'd being L$^{d}$ Lieutenant.

Monday. 29.

Willis let the King see the Queen. He is much worse.

Sheridan told us last night that L$^{d}$ Fitzwilliam had consented to have some place; and that L$^{d}$ Loughboro' was satisfied—the Prince had sent him a message by Sheridan offering him the Chancellor.

Nothing in the house of Lords but conversation; and the house of Commons adjourned till Wednesday.

Tuesday, 30.

The house adjourn'd to Thursday on acc$^{t}$ of the Speaker's illness which some people suspect to be *sham*. The Duke of Richmond told Bess that the limitations were sent by Mr. Pitt to the Prince—that they were Peerages Patent places and the household—but we heard afterwards that he had not sent them.[1] The Duke of Cumberland told her that the K. had told the D of York just before he was ill that feeling himself unfit he had thoughts of giving the Prince the Crown and retiring with his family but that he was taken ill the next day— L$^{d}$ Stormont never signs any protest [so as] not to have any thing quoted ag$^{st}$ him—46 L$^{ds}$ signd it. Saw Sheridan late: the Prince had just got the limitations—he believ'd Pitt was with him— The Queen talk'd to the K. in german and he call'd himself Assuerus [Ahasuerus], the Queen Vashti—and L$^{y}$ Pembroke Esther —he told the Queen he c$^{d}$ not live with her till the year '93—and s$^{d}$ he sh$^{d}$ make L$^{y}$ P— Marchioness of Kingston.

Wednesday 31.

Mr Pitt's letter to the Prince, was insolently couch'd; and stipulated peerages, Patent places, and the household under the Queen—[2] They are thinking of a way to make the Princes answer which is to be a noble one, be made Public— Sheridan call'd here in his way to Mr. Foxes who is at Mrs. Armisteads in South St. to avoid the bore of seeing people who are now told he is out of town.

Thursday 1st January.

Saw my B$^{r}$— L$^{d}$ Grantley is dead— the D of Portland had sent to him about Surrey; he had been in the borough to secure L$^{d}$ W$^{m}$ Russel his

[1] He had, however, on this day. It was the second letter addressed to the Prince by the minister.

[2] The letter is given in Adolphus, Vol. IV., p. 341. Adolphus too shares in the general mistake as to the real authorship of the famous reply to it.

Election— Bard Hopkins[1] to oppose him— My B[r] told me the D. of P told him y[t] at the meeting at Charles's some had wanted the P. to ask further explanation of Pitt but overrul'd— din'd at Rich[mond] House warm disputes, between Crawford L[y] M and Rich[mond]— Saw Sheridan at Night—he came here tho' he ought to have been writing the Prince's answer—Burke had wrote one he s[d], all fire and tow L[d] Loughboro' one, all ice and snow—and he was to make one out of Both—it's to go to-morrow.[2] Duke of Rich abus'd Charles for running from L[d] North. D of D[evonshire] s[d] he ran from a place not to one.

2[d] of Jan[ry].

Sheridan staid here too late last night so y[t] he c[d] not get the writing done and copy'd by Mrs. Sheridan till two to day and was oblig'd to go to the Prince and with him to Charles Foxes, before he had sent the letter for Charles's inspection.

When he came to Charles with the Prince he found [Thomas] Grenville and Fitzpatrick there, and the note he wrote here last night saying he should be ready by 9, pin[n']d up on the chimney— Charles spoke crossly to him—and s[d] something (he won't tell what), to which Sheridan answer'd— I am as God made me and hate personalitys and they have been boudéing each other all day.

The Speaker[3] is dead— There has been a great quarrel between Willis and Warren and [it is said] that the Queen sent for Warren, and wanted him to sign the Bulletin that the King was better when he found him in exactly the same state of Madness only good humour'd, Warren was stout and it is s[d] the Queen pressed him to say what the K had said y[t] was mad, Warren hung off and she sent L[y] Harcourt and Charlotte Finch to him to whom he told the expressions were too gross but that he had s[d] Dr. Willis slept every night with y[e] Queen. Mr. Grenville will be chose speaker.— A hand bill was sent to Mrs. Fitzherbert telling her y[t] tomorrow 500 libels w[d] be publishd declaring the P had forfeited his right to the Crown by marrying her—Sheridan call'd here at 2 in his way to the Booksellers to suppress it.

2[d] January.

[The Speaker dead—they mean to propose W[m] Grenville—the H of C met only to adjourn to Monday to chuse a Speaker—Sheridan did not get the letter copy'd from the Prince to Pitt till two—Charles Fox angry with him and abus'd him for delay. D[r] Warren had a great dispute with Willis

[1] There are several instances of this name, but I have not been able to identify this one. Lewis Hopkins, the "Welsh bard," died in 1771.

[2] This important passage, conjoined with much other original evidence, proves that Sheridan wrote the celebrated Letter hitherto ascribed to Burke.

[3] Cornwall, on December 30, when the House adjourned for three days. Sheridan in the midst of all this business found time to write a most witty epitaph on him and his brother-in-law, Lord Grantley, who died on the same day. Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 83. Grenville was chosen in his stead.

and came to town to complain, for the King is only goodhumourdly Mad but not *less* so and they wanted Warren to sign Willis's acc$^{t}$ saying he was much better. This if possible to be brought before P$^{t}$—a hand bill sent this Eve$^{g}$ to Mrs. Fitz. alarm'd her much as it inform'd her, 500 libels ag$^{st}$ her were to be published tomorrow. Sheri went to stop it.]

3$^{d}$ Saturday.

Nothing particular.

Sunday 4th January.

Fred North told Bess [Lady Elizabeth Foster] a very good joke of L$^{d}$ Carmaerthen's—somebody s$^{d}$ y$^{t}$ Charles Fox by bringing on the question of right had let the cat out of the bag. L$^{d}$ Carmaerthen s$^{d}$ I am glad of it for *the Rats* began to be troublesome. Somebody talking of the imposition of the Atkinsons,[1] one a dealer in Rum, the other in Wheat; L$^{d}$ North s$^{d}$ one was a villain in spirit and y$^{e}$ other in grain.

The Prince a good while with me, thinks that the Chancellor has lectur'd y$^{e}$ Queen for she was civil to Warren to day. A note came to him from y$^{e}$ D. of York saying that Jack Robinson was inclin'd to treat—but that he sh$^{d}$ employ somebody it being below his dignity to speak to him himself. Grey said Burke calls L$^{y}$ Harcourt and L$^{y}$ C Finch receivers of the King's ribaldry. Sheridan came at night and said he had made it up with Charles. They all disapprove of treating with Jack Robinson—the Prince and Sheridan had a little quarrel about it.

Monday 5th.

W$^{m}$ Grenville chose by a majority of 71. Grey and Sheridan think we were wrong to try it.

Tuesday 6th Jan$^{y}$.[2]

The house up at 9. Mr. Loveden, an arm'd Neutralist, mov'd for a new examination of the Physicians, which Pitt at length agreed to—this was necessary as y$^{e}$ chancellor had s$^{d}$ some days back in y$^{e}$ house of L$^{ds}$ y$^{t}$ the King was better —, an amendment was proposd by Sheridan to have Hawkins y$^{e}$ Surgeon attend, superceded [*sic*] by one of Burke's which we were beat on and by this not being understood, Sheridan got the blame out of the house of our being beat—very angry when the Duke of Bedford told him of it.[3]

[1] For these rich supporters of Pitt, cf. "The Rolliad," *passim*. Jenkinson (afterwards Lord Liverpool) and the elder Atkinson are there called "the two Kinsons."

[2] Pitt's motion on the restrictions, and Loveden's motion for a new inquiry, which was carried by 221 to 141.

[3] So much, it will be noted, for Burke's sagacity and Sheridan's perpetual liability to being made a scapegoat.

Wednesday 7th.

The Duke of Rich. told Bess they shall carry the limitations by a smaller Majority than usual.

I saw the Prince; we have carry'd it in the City ag$^{st}$ the address to Pitt and a vote of censure. Sheridan writes me word from the Comittee, y$^{t}$ they wrangle every minute and divide 9 to 12—the Prince very angry with Fred Montague who by being away makes us 9 ag$^{st}$ 10—otherways Pitt must always have given the casting vote. Grey came in from y$^{e}$ comittee—saw Charles who came out to drink some broth and heard him tell Warren he must bring him in, about the Queen I fancy. S$^{r}$ Lucas Pepys try'd to make the King better but fail'd. Willis's Examination favourable to us. Warren was examining by the last acc$^{t}$ I had from Grey at 12. We have lost y$^{e}$ address in y$^{e}$ bor[r]ough.

Thursday 8th.

[The commit[t]ee[1] going on strongly for us and great and important evidence coming out about the Queen. The Prince here—the Duke of Richmond wants to see him now about plans he ought to have shew'd him months ago—thinks he wishes to speak to him and means to have the Duke of York present. The D$^{ss}$ of Gordon at her Assembly wanted Bess and I to go with her to y$^{e}$ house of Commons. I was taken ill this night and kept my bed—was unable to hear news for 3 days but I make this out.]

Friday 9.

The commit[t]ee went on favourably for us, Sheridan was in a great rage and laid about him on friend and foe. He I believe inadvertently and against Mr Fox's wish, had mention'd Willis's famous letter and got rather into a scrape—it sat till three—Burke asked Willis what medecine he gave the King—he s$^{d}$, gum quiacum and Burke s$^{d}$, gum quackeum I believe.

Saturday 10.

Great wrangling in the com[m]ittee;—they w$^{d}$ not allow Hawkins to be examin'd, being no Doctor; and when We objected to young Willis being examin'd on the same acc$^{t}$ Pitt s$^{d}$ the Arch$^{p}$ of Canterbury had made him a Dr the day before. Fox too ill to attend—but the examination goes on well for us. Willis s$^{d}$ Warren was a Spy and brag[g']d of being one at Kew. My Brother was here this morning by my bed—the Duke desir'd me and I sounded him again about the L$^{d}$ Lieutenancy, and got him to speak to the Duke; at Dinner at Carleton House the Irish patriots there drunk his health—wishing the L$^{d}$ Lieutenant to be in the room and turning to my B$^{r}$. Willis sleeping in the outward room at the commitee, Dreamtt he was at home and hearing noise in the comittee room, thought it was his mad

[1] For fresh examination of the physicians. It lasted a week.

people breaking loose, and calls out what y^e^ Devil are you making such a noise for.

Sunday 11.

I heard from my Sister, and afterwards from my B^r^ that his mind was a little come round about the Lord Lieutenancy—; I got him to promise to call on the D of Portland tomorrow and then I got the D. of Devonshire to call on him, to prepare him and make him offer it again to my B^r^. The Duke came home late—and told me it was offer'd to y^e^ D of N^d^ but he wish'd he had known; preffering my B^r^—; however, as y^e^ D of Northumberlands answer was not rec^d^—he would press my B^r^ again. I found y^e^ Duke had misunderstood me and thought my B^rs^ mind quite chang'd, not *only* wavering—and I made him write in y^e^ middle of the night to the D of P. Nothing but treachery going forward—Sheridan heres [*sic*] Grey has abus'd him, Grey is abus'd by the others.

Monday 12.

My B^r^ calld late. The Duke of Portland was amazingly kind—and seem'd, tho' wishing for Pelham, to be ready to indulge him about his secretary—they must wait till the D of Northumberland to whom it is offer'd—gives his answer but sh^d^ he accept it I think they will still give him y^e^ Ordinance and Ireland to my B^r^. My B^r^ has heard a good character of Pelham, but thinking the L^d^ Lieutenant & Secre^y^ sh^d^ go hand in hand, had rather have one, he knows more—thinks of Mr. Graham y^e^ Lawyer.

Warren and the Chancellor were disputing whether the King w^d^ get better or not. Warren said, I'll be d——d if he does, and there you have it in y^r^ own words.

Tuesday 13.

My B^r^ was very much peak'd into his favourable intuitions about Ireland by L^y^ Bay[h]am telling Lavinia[1] nobody of weight w^d^ support our administration. Lavinia has taken into her head all manner of groundless and unwarrantable doubts of Mr. Pelham. L^y^ George came to me, about an Inclination George has to be Lord of the Trea^ry^ if it is offer'd him. I mention'd it to the Duke.

Great private Treachery—Sheridan here, and says L^d^ John T[ownshend] and Stanhope, had made Tickel [1] think, that Grey and Lambton had abus'd him—this was the old attack of Sheridan courting the Prince and encouraging the praise of him in the world and papers where Fox is abus'd.

Tuesday [Monday 12.]

I saw Grey—he never had abus'd Sheridan to L^d^ J T— all he said, was that one night at Brookes's, he was desir'd by the Prince to send for

[1] Lavinia, Lady Spencer, daughter of Lord Lucan, and an accomplished artist.

Sheridan, to come to him. Grey sent down to the commitee—but Sheridan was not there (I believe he was here y$^{t}$ night) and ye Prince asking Grey about it—he sent for the Chairman he had employ'd into the room, and when the Prince left he s$^{d}$ to L$^{d}$ J T & Fitz "I was anxious he sh$^{d}$ know I had sent le[a]st he sh$^{d}$ think that I was jealous of Sheridan's favour with him and had kept back the Message":— Grey went to the com[m]it[t]ee to clear it up with S. My B$^{r}$ was with the D of Portland and very much delighted with him. Sheridan shew'd us to night the hand bill announcing the Libel ag$^{st}$ Mrs Fitz—it is to be deliver'd in Sloane St Tomorrow. It is sad stuff.

Wednesday 14.

[*Cetera desunt.*]

# APPENDIX IV

## LETTERS FROM SHERIDAN TO THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE AND HER SISTER, LADY BESSBOROUGH

# IV

## LETTERS FROM SHERIDAN TO THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE AND HER SISTER, LADY BESSBOROUGH

### Prefatory Note.

These letters are transcribed from the autographs formerly in the possession of Mr. Claude Ponsonby. It is difficult in the cases where addresses are absent to distinguish with certainty which of these were meant for the Duchess of Devonshire and which for her sister, Lady Henrietta Frances Duncannon, afterwards Countess of Bessborough. But whenever the initials "T. L." are used it is Georgiana who is addressed, while the initial "F." signifies her sister, who was equally gifted, more beautiful, and with Sheridan to the end. Some of the letters are addressed to them both, and there is one written jointly to the Duchess of Devonshire and her close friend Lady Elizabeth Foster, whom the Duke married three years after Georgiana's death.

W. S.

### (A)

*To Lady Bessborough* [1788?].

Tuesday Night.

I must bid *'oo* good night, for by the light passing to and fro near your room I hope you are going to bed and to sleep happily with an hundred little cherubs fanning their white wings over you in approbation of your goodness. Yours is the sweet, untroubled sleep of purity.

Grace shine around you with serenest beams and whispering Angels prompt your golden dreams! And yet, and yet—*Beware!!* Milton will tell you that even in Paradise serpents found their way to the ear of slumbering innocence. Then to be sure poor Eve had no watchful guardian to pace up and down beneath her windows, or clear-sighted friend to warn her of the sly approaches of T's [?Townshend] and F's [?Fitzpatrick] and W's [?], and a long list of wicked letters; and Adam, I suppose,—was at Brooks's! "Fye, Mr. S."—I answer fye, fye, fye Lord D[uncannon]. Tell him either to come with you, or forbid your coming to a House so inhabited. Now don't look grave. Remember it is my office to speak truth. I shall be gone before your hazel eyes are open to morrow, but for the sake of the Lord D. that you will not suffer me to return. Do not listen to Jack's [J. Townshend's] Elegies, or smile at F's [Fitzpatrick's] epigrams, or tremble at C W's frowns, but put on that look of gentle firmness, of proud humility, and pass on in Maiden Meditation fancy free.—

Now draw the curtain, Sally.

(B)

*To the Duchess of Devonshire: a long fragment of playful and mysterious self-exculpation* [?1789].

. . . You ask me about coming, and I must not forget to tell you, which I was nearly doing, that I have both had a letter and seen him since. I brought his letter one day to town meaning to send it to you, but I did not write, but I will write again from Deepdene,[1] and send you that and another. I am not satisfied about M[r]. Spencer, but you may rely on my never thinking more of it as far as relates to him. What you will think odd is that I have had a letter also from *him*, but nothing about this, but, what is odder, it is accompanied by one from his mother, and, what is odder still, she wants to see me, and her motive, by his account, still odder than all. I left these letters too at Deepdene or I would send them to you, and if by the blessing of God you had been wise in the Times, I would have asked you what I ought to do.

I ought also to tell you a Piece of a Political secret, but after such a volume, Ma'am, I think you will dispense with my telling anything more—or even mentioning the Eclogue I have written for you called Callonius and Tamphosbine, in which there are some very pretty verses, I assure you. The character of the Shepherds, well discriminated, their community of woe and hope, the boyish despondency of the one and the discriminating mirth of the other, the broken sighs and broken English, the apostrophe to Necker and the quotations from Tully, the State Papers, the Garter and the State Arcade, all are naturally introduced and are even ornamental without violating the simplicity of Pastoral responses. The character of Bess too,[2]—but this reminds me of the unextinguishable enmity which at this moment rises in my breast against her—never to be explained, never to be appeased. God bless *you*, T. L.[3]

As for the other charge, my "wanting to make *a great deal* of some *very slight and natural* treachery of poor Tamphosbine's," never was anything so unjust. I did not even know to what flagitious and unheard of lengths *poor* Tamphosbine had attempted to proceed, till you told me! and I shudder to think there can be such treachery in the world, natural or acquired!!! I am clear such men can have no peace of mind. But was I malicious or unfair about this? Pray remember that what I wrote was on the table at D[evonshire] House, and left for Bess to finish—at least I left the Story in safe hands. But I should not be in the least surprised to hear of some sort of jocose tale of this sort being made even about me: for it is a world alas! in which *Propriety* of *Conduct*, and Purity and decorum of Sentiment are only taunted at and reviled! I must certainly seek some *country*, and there pass my disappointed life in praying for all your amendment, and

[1] The Duke of Norfolk had lent Deepdene to the Sheridans in 1788-9.
[2] Lady Elizabeth Foster, the Duchess's inseparable companion.
[3] Pet initials for the Duchess.

deprecating the heavy retribution which I fear is in store for you. And now after all I will admit that it was very goodnatured in you to write to me again, and very wrong in me not to write before, but the truth is that I had got at one time so completely bewildered in every possible scrape of every description, that the obvious thing to many people would have been to lie down and die. And I could not write to you with pleasure then, tho' I always wish to hear from you. I had a letter from —— [*illegible*] when I received your's from Leicester, very envious.—But why should you make any particular victory [?] for yourself if C. Greville comes with your Bridgemans? I shall never think, let it come in whatever shape to me, that you have violated our League in anything you say, and it should be understood that you might talk of me in any way you like for any purpose, or I of you, only keeping faith to each other. As for C. G., though I think he would abuse me, I believe him to be very well-meaning—if his meaning was of a sort that signified.

(C)

(1) *To the same on the political outlook and the Duchess's speculations.*

Bromley—Wed. evg 1790.

I write you a line from here because since I wrote to you I have heard things from *very good* authority that make me think everything will look very *Warrish* even without news from Spain.[1] The Empress certainly is blustering, the K. of Prussia has actually marched troops, and there is very good reason to believe the French fleet or a part of it has *sailed* from Brest. There is very bad news from India. Lord Cornwallis thinks matters so critical that he does *not* come home, but will probably go to Madras where he has dismissed and disgraced Holland, the Governor, and Taylor, one of the Council, for neglecting everything necessary to oppose Tippoo, who has the country almost at his mercy.

Lord M[ornington] told me you expected to see me, but I had called before I wrote. I was very glad to hear her say that you were in better spirits to-day and that Lady E. is so much better. Only *once* get yourself and *her* out of all scrapes, and if good Fortune has any good Nature and will do that, let us try her and tempt her no more.

I think if *B.*, who is the only one as far as I can judge, fit to be trusted or at least the best, was properly spoke to—he would go still further on good grounds. I will tell you something he told me last night when I see you. He has now a written authority of yours on the subject in his desk which *another* Person gave up to him,—and which he should give up.

T. L., if you write to him tomorrow and think I can do any good, I will come early on Friday.

[1] This refers to Pitt's wish to force the Empress of Russia to restore Oczakow to the Porte.

(2) *To Lady Bessborough* [?] *on the Russian imbroglio* [1790?].

Tuesday Night

Your letter made me happy and easy, but let me hear of no checks or Relapses, do you mind. Fox and Grey are just gone from me. I will speak if there is an opportunity, but I don't think there will be a good one. . . . There will be nothing to answer. . . . For, Ma'am, if the Empress can gain an ascendency in Poland and by commanding the navigation of the Dnieper and the Dniester get complete possession of the Black Sea, then, Ma'am, with the future connivance or assistance of the Emperor, she may certainly get actual Possession of Constantinople and the European Provinces of Turkey which is all that's necessary, and then, Ma'am turn the Black Sea into a Wet Dock, and floating down her Stores from the North, fit out such a fleet, when no one can peep at her, that out they will come to the Mediterranean swallow up all the States of Italy like larks; and at last a Russian Brigadier, may be quartered at Roehampton,[1] for aught I know, within these hundred years, so on your account, Ma'am, I am rather for the Balance of Europe.

[*To the autograph is attached a small slip of the same note-paper with the following :*—" I will not write now, for I am worse than melancholy. E. [Mrs. Sheridan] too is very unwell, she has been bled this evening, and I have not been out. I will write again in the morn."]

(D)

*To the Duchess of Devonshire: a further letter on his negotiations with Martindale*[2] *respecting her speculations* [1790?].

I was quite convinced that I should have sent you volumes whenever Crawfurd should really go, and now I am in the greatest hurry possible so I shall reserve all I have to say for the Post; and it is a great deal. Pray don't think me negligent about M[artindale], and I am afraid you have too, but I assure you, dear T. L., it has not been my fault. He is the most shuffling fellow I ever knew, and after repeated promises to send me every scrap of paper in a packet sealed up, he at last affected a qualm about the propriety of delivering these into my hands without an *express order* from *you*, which he said I had not; and this is so far true, though I told him he must understand that the same authority on which he sent the bond was sufficient to justify his delivering up the rest. I could not shew him your letters authorizing me to get them, because they spoke of him in such terms. At last I told him how ill I thought he behaved and how unfair his trifling was, and that Lord Spencer and Mr. Coutts would apply to him. This I thought had more effect with him than his promises,

[1] The Bessboroughs had a house there.

[2] Martindale has been mentioned in the text as one who abetted the speculations of great ladies, and kept a faro table.

—and he says he will deposit the papers with either under two seals affecting a scruple that it would be unfair to you to trust them into anyone's hands on any other terms,—or he offers to burn them in the presence of any of us upon a new doubt whether there might not arise some inconvenience to *him*, if they were not destroyed.

I made him however promise to write a letter (which he has since sent me) disclaiming any remaining demand whatever on you, but whether he has done this in the way he promised I would not swear, as he sent it sealed. I enclose it however, and I should think there would be no further difficulty if you send him a peremptory order to deliver the papers under as many seals as he pleases. I must not stop to say a million of things I ought to say about other matters,—but only [why] do you never write me [a] line? There is one subject too I do most vehemently want to talk to you about—though I am afraid—but don't *you* be afraid, for it relates only to *yourself* and interests me only because it is so dangerous to you. But I will write you by the Post which will probably reach you before the Fish.[1]

Your very faithful and obedient.

*She*[2] is very well, but you will have letters of course. What do you do with all the fugitive Princes? I never thought I should live to wish myself a Frenchman, but I would not hang the poor, old, foolish men. I will write tomorrow and to Bess.

(E)

*Addressed "Duchess of Devonshire or Lady E. Foster"* [? 1790].

I don't know whether you are all out, giddy, gay, and chirriping like Linnets and yellow Hammers, or sitting at home soberly like pretty Bantams and Peafowl on your Perches. Pray send me [a] Line, if you receive this, dear T. L. Dear Bess.—I called today.

(F)

*To the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Bessborough, "Friday, March 2, 1792." This is the sole surviving portion of the letter journal which in this year (that of his wife's death) Sheridan agreed to dispatch regularly to Georgiana and her sister, who had gone abroad. The speech to which he refers is one on "The Armament against Russia," in which Sheridan, on February 29, followed Whitbread (cf. Speeches, Vol. II., p. 93).*

Two very late days in the House of Commons and sitting up late afterwards have destroyed all the hours of the day, all the night, and all the morning.—

[1] This probably relates to Mr. Crawford, who was called "Fish" Crawford.

[2] ? Lady Bessborough.

And now I return again to my journal—which after breaking my last Promise, I will not again swear never to interrupt, but I am sure I never shall. Now I ought to renew my Complaints, [*two words erased by the recipient*] on your silence, but I will defer it till I get to Southampton, because I have a million of things to do before I leave town tomorrow. I again compare the time when you left of[f] writing with the time when you must have received my last, and I am sure your silence could not have been caused by your not hearing from me, but I must some day argue this with you once for all. I cannot bear the footing you want to put it upon—yet [*some words erased by the recipient*] do not be angry at my illustration of it. You will see that I was not serious—never, never can I be so when I seem to utter a word like unkindness to you. My total incapacity of having a word like news to tell you continues. I am sure that instead of wishing it [? not] so, you must be more and more tired of many letters you receive from me. The Newspapers will tell you of our debates and divisions, if you care about them. Grey spoke uncommonly well, better much than ever. I spoke very well too, Ma'am, I know, but very late; Whitbread and Wyndham, remarkably well. Their side [*i.e., Pitt's*] execrably, except young Jenkinson, whom we all agreed to puff, to enrage Pitt, though in fact it remains to be found whether he has anything in him or not. I think he has, though Pitt made a miserable figure yesterday after Fox. But what is the good of it all? Heaven bless you [*words erased*].

Bagshot Sund. Morn.

I came here very late last night with D[r] Moseley. He could not leave town till eleven so I kept my dinner engagement with Tickell. The party was Jack and Lady John Fitzpatrick, Adam and Richardson, Mrs. Tickell and her sister.[1] We had a sufficiency of sparring of course. Lady John, I thought, looked remarkably well, and she has rusticated herself into a trick of colouring at everything like a milkmaid, and she does it very becomingly.[2] —Moseley is ready.—I am taking him to see E. [Mrs. Sheridan], who is much better, because I want to decide about moving her.—The last time Dame Frost threw her back for a time sadly—and I find she concealed it from me.—

Southampton. Sund. Night.

Moseley thinks very well of E. He returns early in the morn. I shall enclose this to Carrington by him that I may not miss a post—and then journalise on [*some words erased*].

[1] Both of them Miss Leighs. Romney painted the second Mrs. Tickell several times before her marriage. She was a great beauty. Some years after Tickell's death she married a Mr. Worthington.

[2] Lady J. Townshend was a *divorcée* and had been Mrs. E. Fawkener.

(G)

*The same continued.*

Tuesday Night

I wrote to you in rather good Spirits yesterday, for I like the quiet of this spot, and E. seemed much better, and I wrote in the morning when the gloom upon everyone's mind is lighter. But now I am just returned from a long solitary walk on the beach. Night, Silence, Solitude, and the Sea combined will unhinge the cheerfulness of anyone where there has been length of Life enough to bring regret in reflecting on many past scenes, and to offer slender hope in anticipating the future. [*Nearly three lines have been here erased by the recipient.*]

There never has been any part of your letter that has more of my attention and interested me so much as when you have appeared earnestly solicitous to convey to my mind the Faith, the Hope, and the Religious Confidence which I do believe exist in yours. Accomplish this [*two words erased*] if you can, and if there is any true merit in convincing selfish incredulity, or reclaiming those who, tho' not quite hardened, can find no solace in seeking for truths they must dread . . . [*the sentence is unfinished, and two words again erased at the beginning of the next*].

How many years have passed since on these unreasoning, restless waters, which this night I have been gazing at and listening to, I bore poor E., who is now so near me fading in sickness, from all her natural attachments and affections, and then loved her so that, had she died as I once thought she would in the Passage, I should assuredly have plunged with her body to the Grave.[1] What times and what changes have passed! You—[*some words erased*] what have been your sufferings! What has the interval of my Life been, and what is left me but misery from Memory, and a horror of Reflexion?—

(H)

*The same resumed in May: Sheridan was now taking his wife in deep anxiety to the Hot Wells, Bristol. Nearly a whole page is thickly crossed out: from a few words remaining it seems to convey an explanation of his silence. The letter is apparently addressed jointly to the Duchess and Lady Bessborough.*

Speen-Hill. Thursday May 3d [1792].

. . . [so] grating to my mind to think or talk upon, and upon these it was no relief to my mind to communicate, and I appeared . . . [*a line here erased*], which never was my motive.

Why have I not written to you lately?—F. [? Lady Bessborough], I shall now prove what your regard for me has been and is. *Forgive my silence, and write kindly to me when you receive this.* In the most melancholy hours I

[1] This refers to his elopement in 1772.

have ever known, for I never felt so without Hope on a point that interested us before, I find my mind turning towards you as the only creature whom I find it a relief to think of, or with whom it is an ease to me to communicate, or from whose words I can look for anything consoling or reconciling. O [? "*T. L.*" *erased*], however negligent, mysterious or unaccountable my conduct may have appeared to you, let me now find that I am not deceived in the opinion I have of the unalterable kindness of your Heart and nature.

I am writing to you on the Road to Bristol, while E. is in bed very, very ill—eager to get there, and sanguine of the Event. But many glaring omens have told me our Hopes will be disappointed. I have been in long and great anxiety about her,—flying from my Fears and yet hoping, one event safely over, that all would be well.[1] But this day se'nnight, every favourable appearance exceeded our most sanguine hopes, since Friday when the infant was christened and she has been steadily falling back. Her impatience to get to Bristol made all delay impossible. I was to have followed her in a week, but yesterday she was so sunk and alarmed that she begged me not to leave her, tho' before, she had stipulated that I should settle my affairs in town, and I was only come with her to Maidenhead Bridge, so I returned to town for a few hours, and have overtaken her to-day in this place. Her friend, whom she loves best in the world, Mrs. Canning, I have prevailed on to accompany her and she is now with her.—There never was in the world a more friendly act than her doing so. She has left her daughter and all her children whom she dotes on for this office. Poor E. feels such a difference in her conduct from her worldly Friendships, and in many ways her Society is the greatest help to her, and what no other Person could have been. Dear F., shall you I wonder think it selfish in me now to share so many gloomy thoughts and melancholy moments with you as I must if I write to you?

(I)

*The same resumed a week or so later: endorsed, apparently by the Duchess,* "*Received Geneva June* 21, 1792."

Bristol. Monday Night.

We got here safely yesterday, and she has borne the latter part of the journey amazingly well, and appears much better today. Dr. Bain, a young Physician lately settled here, and who came here himself in a consumption, is reckoned very skilful in these cases.[2] I have avoided asking him distinctly what he thinks, but I flatter myself from Mrs.

[1] This refers to the birth of their little daughter Mary some two months earlier.

[2] Dr. Bain remained ever afterwards Sheridan's doctor, and communicated the details of his last hours to Thomas Moore.

Canning's manner, he does not think so ill of her as I feared. [*Some words erased here.*]

I do not feel as if I should pursue my plan of writing to you and sharing the melancholy moments I pass here, for the only time I am away from her at night I get into such gloomy fits that I can do nothing. If you were with me now, you would not think it necessary to bid me reflect or look into my own mind—I stopt yesterday evening as we came over King's Down, while poor E.'s Chaise was going slowly down the Hill,—and went to the spot where my life was strangely saved once.[1] It is marked with a great Stone cut by the man who, I remember, used to make a show of our broken swords, and a sleeve-button of mine, and the setting of her Picture which was broke on my neck, and placed where he found the blood. At this man's cottage, I remember, I got some water and I remember many thoughts that passed in my mind, believing, as I did, that I was dying. [*Two words erased here.*] . . . What an interval has passed since, and scarce one promise that I then made to my own soul have I attempted to fulfil. I looked at the carriage that bore her down the same road, and it wrung my heart to think over the interval, the present and the too probable conclusion. My nerves are shook to pieces. The irregularity of all my Life and pursuits, the restless, contriving temper with which I have persevered in wrong Pursuits and Passions makes [*some words erased, of which "errors" is legible*] reflexion worse to me than even to those who have acted worse. God bless you.

(K)

*The same continued.*

Thursday May 10th.

My dear [? "*T. L.*" *erased*], I find it useless to think of writing to you anything but a repetition of the same course of symptoms, hopes, and apprehension. Each hour of each day has been exactly the same since I have been here. We all think she is getting better, and she is certainly much stronger. She drinks the Waters and goes on the Down twice a day, though the weather is very unpleasant. I see no soul, but get up very early and ride before she gets up. Lady Sarah Napier is here with Mr. Napier who is very ill but getting well. If E. continues as well as at present, I shall go to town for a few hours, for I have left things of great importance, as far as business and one's affairs are of importance, in most ruinous confusion, and just as all I have been about ought to be finally well settled.

Monday May 13th.

She was so well on Saturday that I meant that night to have gone to town, but in the evening she grew very ill again—and was so all next day

[1] This and the following interesting recollections refer to his second duel in July, 1772, for Miss Linley's sake, with Mathews.

and Monday. She wanted to receive the Sacrament. Ever since she has been brought to bed, she has turned her head almost wholly to think and talk and read on religious subjects, and her fortitude and Calmness have astonished me. She has put by any other contemplation. I am confident if she can recover, there never was on earth anything more perfect than she will be; and to be different she says, to me for ever from what she has been makes her so seriously eager to live. But she cannot be deceived about the Danger of her situation. The affection and kindness of her words and manner to me make me more unhappy, and do not Comfort. Dear [*erased*, ? "*F.*"], I know that either you or T. L. if you were to see her would be affected more than you would think it possible. Last night she desired to be placed at the Piano-Forte. Looking like a shadow of her own Picture, she played some notes with the tears dropping on her thin arms. Her mind is become heavenly, but her mortal form is fading from my sight, and I look in vain into my own mind for assent to her apparent conviction that all will not perish. I mean to send for my son, and she wishes for him.

(L)

*The same continued.*

Sunday Night.

Another dismal Day got thro', but a day of more alarm. I was called up at 4 this morning,—a shocking sensation such a message is,—George telling me that for three hours she had had a violent pain in her side. I went to Dr. Bain,—he directed Leeches instead of bleeding,—they have relieved her and she has been pretty well all day, but has not gone out. He has found fault this morning with her eating chicken for dinner—which I could not prevail on her to desist from, and it has quickened her Pulse again but he thinks she shall have a good night. She would read none of the books I got her today, but we got Bain in the evening, and I read to her again.

Wednesday Night

Very poorly to-day.—At two o'clock she was bled, and tonight she has put on a blister. Yet Bain does not seem to think so much of this attack. While she slept this morning, I rode to a place where I remember she made me drive her when poor M^rs^ Tickell was dying here.[1] It is a spot on the side of Brandon's Hill where she and her sister used to play when they were at a boarding-school close by. And I remember how bitterly she cried here and lamented her sister's approaching Fate. O [*two words erased*], I cannot describe to you how sunk I am and how horrid the solitude of the night is to me. I now watch half the night in the expectation of being called for by some new alarm.

[1] The first Mrs. Tickell, her sister Mary, died in 1787.

Tuesday 22d.

[*A word erased*]—one of the miseries of the Disorder is the uncertainty of the appearances. Although the week began so ill, before the end of it she was much better than since she has been brought to bed. If this will but last, we shall all have the greatest hopes. She frets herself at my not going to town on this business, so that tomorrow evening, I mean to set off when she goes to bed, and, stopping but a few hours in town, return before She is up on Thursday. I shall take this disjointed scrawl with me. I should have sent before, but I thought to have gone, and I heard T. L. was coming immediately.

Yesterday finding herself so well and collected she received the Sacrament. She first wrote a long Paper to be given me by Mrs Canning in case she should not recover. She said to her that she was grateful for the opportunity of being able to do this, that she hoped to receive it back from her, but at all events it was a great ease to her mind to have done it.

(M)

*To Lady Bessborough, dated "Isleworth, August 27th," and endorsed (presumably by Lady B.) "Ostia, Sept. 12. 1792." At the end in the same hand are the words "24th, l'ultima per sempre addio," but if Sheridan be meant this was not either her or the Duchess's last "farewell," for they constantly saw each other for some ten years onwards. Sheridan's letter was written about one month after his wife's death, and in the big house which he inhabited when Pamela and Madame de Genlis were his guests.*

[*Some words erased*], is it not strange that hearing so little from you for so long a time, I yet own that your silence was not painful to me? Even *your* letters would not have been welcome tho' I must know how kindly they would have been meant. Even if I could have seen you, I should have avoided you as yet. But I must think it fortunate that exactly as I began to feel a little hurt at your silence, and found my mind looking for the relief of your kindness and attention to me, I received your last short but most welcome letter. I will write to you now constantly, and now [*some words erased*], you cannot write too much to me. I shall know then that you are not estranged from me. And pray tell me a great deal, and everything about yourself. How strange I feel it to be that I should know so little. I will tell you all my Plans and what I mean to do when I have settled things I have been fortunately forced to give my attention to. I will say little of the past, when I have once sent you a melancholy detail I wrote on purpose for you. I exert myself in every way, and avoid remembering or reflecting as much as possible, but there are thoughts and forms and sounds that haunt my heart and will not be put away.

[*Some words erased*], write to me now constantly. I entreat you do, I am sure you will.

Pray remember me to dear T. L. Why are you separated?

(N)

(1) *To the same: a letter regarding a debate (probably of* 1802*; the paper's watermark is* 1801*). Sheridan's hurried scrawl is addressed "L^y^ Bessborough."*

½ past 10.

Dear L^y^ Bessborough

I have done what I would do for no one breathing but you —left the House while Fox was speaking, to answer your note.—The debate will, I suppose, be very short when he sits down. He has spoken not only wonderfully well, but with the greatest possible dexterity, prudence, management, &ct, qualities he has not always at command— He began with putting the House in the best possible humour with him, joking about the temporary *cessation of hostilities* from Pitt's friends, Canning and the like, and he has gone on conciliating the House more and more: taking the most judicious line too in abusing Bonaparte and his government and his "Acts." The first part of his speech, and that to which he will of course recur, was to enforce the propriety and necessity for the Amendment, which he did forcibly, and I daresay will conclude irresistibly, at least to most people's conviction, tho' it may make little or no difference as to votes—though indeed in this respect it will do some good with I think 3 or 4 persons.—It has been hitherto a dry, dull debate not worth detailing to you. Canning's speech had nothing, I think, good in it, even in declamation; and not even lively, which he generally is. Tom Grenville spoke tolerably well, but not very—upon the whole a sensible, dull speech. He made rather an odd avowal in one part of it, saying that he saw nothing *objectionable* in the Amendment—This raised a great cry of hear, hear, as you may imagine, on our part.

I won't write another word. I have lost 5 minutes. [*A word illegible*] Here's obedience, passive obedience with a vengeance.

(2) *Another to the same about a debate probably of* 1803.

I snatch a moment to obey your commands, half famished and ready to sink under noise, heat and fatigue.—Grey has just moved the amendment after a very able, judicious, and argumentative Speech, in which he stated as the ground for his amendment, the impossibility of his acquiescing (under the present unexplained circumstances) in a vote which went directly and positively to assert that the War was unavoidable. He spoke with great perspicacity and force, and was most attentively listened to, which should be of itself a proof of his speech being uncommonly good, for he laboured under the disadvantage of rising immediately after one of the most brilliant and magnificent pieces of declamation that ever fell from that rascal Pitt's lips.—Detesting the Dog as I do, I cannot withhold this just tribute to the Scoundrel's talents. I could not help often lamenting in the course of his harangue, what a pity it is that he has not a particle of honesty in him. He would be a great treasure if he had a

grain. Lord Hawkesbury began the business with a calm, temperate, and sensible speech—and tho' I cannot say at all brilliant or satisfactory (and with bad taste too I thought in two or three of his stale quotations), [it] was upon the whole a judicious, imposing, and statesmanlike Speech.

Erskine followed, agreeing and disagreeing, contradicting and confusing himself, and alternately entertaining and tiring and disgusting the House, and for the most part talking like the veriest Jackass that ever was heard —He began by declaring that he was not nor ever would be the advocate and apologist for France,—and before he ended his object seemed to be to persuade us that he would probably never again be employed as the Advocate of any Country or any individual, and that no one would ever think of giving him ten shillings to advocate any Cause upon Earth.

Pitt raised the War[w]hoop most vehemently and eloquently—and the cry was loud—. He took many sly opportunities, as you may imagine, of ridiculing poor Tom Erskine, whose nonsensical contradictions he treated with a degree of scorn and Contempt that was palpably not quite so palatable to the learned Counsel as they were relished by the House.

Lord Castlereagh, upon Grey's sitting down, rose to speak. I got up immediately to go to dinner, in the middle of which I write to you. What Castlereagh has said, I have not enquired, nor do I mean to do so.—

Here's Submission to your Will!! We shall divide, I suppose, about 50 against 400. I can't send you the words of Grey's amendment, but the substance of it is to leave out all the words that follow the assurances of supporting the dignity of Crown and Country &ct—and adverting continually to the concluding part of the declaration which intimates a desire of cultivating and improving whatever opportunities may offer for procuring peace.

I am half drunk and can write no more—perhaps had better not have written half so much.

House of Commons.
Monday.

(O)

*To the same, most probably from Sheridan, January*, 1809. *It is addressed to "The Countess of Bessborough at Lord Morpeth's, Park Street." It gives the news of Sir J. Moore's death.*

Brooks's 11 o'clock.

Lord Paget is come, they say.—The French attacked us embarking, and Moore killed, your dear Baird lost his arm, and almost killed. Junot commanded—his troops embarked and coming away.
[*in pencil*] Only about 400 killed.

# APPENDIX V

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SHERIDAN'S WORKS PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED

# V

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SHERIDAN'S WORKS PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED

[*In compiling this catalogue, which has been brought up to date, the writer is indebted to Mr. John P. Anderson's British Museum Bibliography contained in Mr. Lloyd Sanders's "Life of Sheridan"; but that list, though admirably compiled, and a necessary foundation for a complete catalogue, is now imperfect, and furthermore it has not always distinguished the skits on Sheridan's plays from the plays themselves. Among the books apparently absent from the British Museum Catalogue are Richardson's Contemporary Edition of the Warren Hastings Speech in the House of Commons, the Paris Edition in English of "The School for Scandal" (1789), one of the skits on that comedy (1784), and the Philadelphia edition (1799) of "Pizarro." All the printed works missing in Mr. Anderson's Bibliography are marked by an asterisk, and an asterisk also marks the unpublished works of Sheridan's which are unknown. All of these are here catalogued for the first time.*]

### (1) Published Works.

#### (A) *Editions of Sheridan's Collected Plays and Works.*

*The Rivals, Duenna, and School for Scandal, in an edition of "Plays." 12mo. Dublin, 1786.

Sheridan's Dramatic Works. 12mo. London [? 1793].

*Do. 8vo. The first edition of his collected plays, containing "The Rivals," "Duenna," "School for Scandal," and "Critic," prefaced by a "Life," separately, with date 1797. Millar, Law & Cater. London, 1798.

*Another edition identical with the last, but undated; the paper bears water-marks 1796 and 1797. [From these water-marks this edition appears to be the earliest state of this first collected publication.]

The Works of the late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan. 2 vols. London, 1821.

*Dramatic Works of Sheridan. Baudry. Paris, 1824.

Dramatic Works with some Observations. 8vo. Greenock, 1829.

Moore's Collected Edition of Sheridan's Works. London, 1833.

Leigh Hunt's Edition. London, 1840.

Another of the same. London, 1846.

Bohn's Edition, with a "Life" by "G. G. S." 1848.

Ludwig Ganter's Edition, with "A Critical Sketch." Stuttgart, 1854.

*Dr. J. P. Browne's. London, 1873.

Stainforth's. London, 1874.

*Chatto's "Complete Works," omitting the speeches with a "Life." London, 1874.

Henry Morley's Edition (part of Morley's "Universal Library"). 1883.

*R. G. White's. 3 vols. New York, 1883.

Dramatic Works of Sheridan and Goldsmith (Cassell's "Miniature Library of the Poets"). 2 vols. London, 1884.
Ditto, ditto. 1886.
Brander Matthews's Edition of Sheridan's Comedies. Boston, 1885.
*Ditto, ditto. London, 1885.
Another. "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal." (Cassell's "National Library.") London, 1886.
Dramatic Works. (Cassell's "Red Library.") London, 1887.
Another edition of the Plays. (Bohn's "Select Library.") London, 1889.
Another edition. London, 1890.
*Plays. (Macmillan's "Library of the English Classics.") 8vo. London, 1900.
*Dramatic Works. London, 1891.
*Dramatic Works (with a short account of Sheridan's Life by G. G. S.). 8vo. 2 vols. London, 1902.
*Sheridan's Humorous Plays. (Virtue's "Turner House Classics.") London, 1902.
*Sheridan's Plays, now printed as he wrote them (with his mother's unprinted comedy, "A Journey to Bath"). (Edited by W. Fraser Rae, with an Introduction by Sheridan's great-grandson, the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava.) 8vo. London, 1902.
*Plays. ("United Library.") 12mo. London, 1903.
*Plays. (Dent's "Every Man's Library.") 12mo. London, 1906.
*Dramatic Works. (Frowde's "Oxford Edition," illustrated, with an Introduction by Joseph Knight.) 8vo. London, 1906.
*Plays. (Hutchinson's "Popular Classics.") 12mo. London, 1906.
*Dramatic Works. (Frowde's "World's Classics.") 12mo. London, 1907.
*Plays. (Sisley's "Panel Books," with a coloured frontispiece.) 12mo. London, 1907.
The Beauties of Sheridan (selections from Poems, Dramas, and Speeches), by A. Howard. London [? 1834].

(B)

The Love Epistles of Aristaenetus, translated from the Greek into English metre by H. S. [viz., N. B. Halhed and R. B. Sheridan], with notes. London, 1771. 8vo.
Do. Second edition, corrected. London, 1773.
The Love Epistles of Aristaenetus, translated by R. B. Sheridan and Mr. Halhed (*Erotica, etc.*). London, 1854.
*Do. [In Chatto's "Complete Works," above listed.] 1874.
Do. Reissued. London, 1883.

(C)

(1) *Clio's Protest; or, "The Picture Varnished," in folio form. [? 1771. Only a few pages of this edition have come under the writer's notice, and are in his possession.]

In "The Rival Beauties" (1771, as appears from date of the Preface) [containing Sheridan's satire, pp. 5 to 17, following the verses which it answered by Miles Peter Andrews, and succeeded by a reply from another hand (possibly Fitzpatrick's)]. London and Bath.

Clio's Protest; or, "The Picture Varnished," with other Poems. London. 8vo. 1819. ["Asmodeo," *i.e.*, R. B. Sheridan.] [The "other poems" include "Verses to Laura," which were written in 1795, and remain in the Sheridan MSS.]

*The same (in Chatto's "Complete Works," above listed). 1874.

(2) *"The Ridotto of Bath, an Epistle from Timothy Screw, Under-server to Messrs. Kuhf & Fitzwater (Bath), to his Brother Henry, Waiter at Almack's (London)."

In the *Bath Chronicle* of October 10, 1771 (reissued in ballad form).

In Vol. I. of "The New Foundling Hospital for Wit" (1784).

In "Clio's Protest" (1819).

(3) (a) An Ode to Scandal, to which are added "Stanzas on Fire." [? 1772.] London, 1819. [And cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 104, and the Appendix to Vol. I., where the Ode is transcribed.]

(b) A Pump Room Scene (being a prelude to "The School for Scandal," cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 211). [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 279.]

(4) [? 1772] *"The Kiss" (an Anacreontic). [Sheridan MSS., and published in "The Festival of Love" (containing Sheridan's name as a contributor). Tomkins. London, *circ.* 1800.]

(5) [? 1772] *"I gave my Love a budding rose." Impromptu (published in "Sheridan's Dramatic Works"). Baudry. Paris, 1824. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 83.]

(6) *? The Elopement of the Graces (in "The Muses and Graces on a Visit to Grosvenor Square." Being a Collection of Original Songs Sung by the Maskers at Mrs. Crewe's Elegant Ball, Tuesday, March 21, 1775. J. Bew. London, 1775).[1]

(7) *The General Fast: a Lyric Ode. By the Author of "The Duenna." London, 1775. [Cf. *ante*, App. to Vol. I.]

(D)

The Rivals. (Produced at Covent Garden Theatre, January 17, 1775.) "A Comedy as it is acted at the Theatre-Royal in Covent Garden. London. Printed for John Wilkie, No. 71, St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1775." "Price one shilling and sixpence." First edition with Preface and Errata, Prologue and Epilogue. The catchword "Epic" on the last page is an error. [Some of the later editions have "Finis" on the last page (p. 100).]

Second edition. 8vo. Wilkie. London, 1775.

Third edition. Ditto, ditto. 1776.

*Fourth edition. Ditto, ditto. 1776.

[1] These verses seem, by their style and occasion, to be Sheridan's. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 518.]

Another edition. 8vo. ("Collection of New Plays," Vol. IV., pp. 143 to 282.) Altenburg. 1778.
Fifth edition. 8vo. Wilkie. London, 1791.
*Another edition. Dublin, 1791.
*Sixth. Wilkie. London, 1798.
Another. 12mo. ("Dramatic Works.") London [1793 ?].
*Another. 8vo (together with "The School for Scandal," "Critic," and "Duenna," in the first collected edition of his plays). Millar. London, 1797.
Another. 12mo. (Mrs. Inchbald's "British Theatre," Vol. XIX.) London, 1808.
Another. ("Modern British Drama," Vol. IV.) London, 1811.
Another. 16mo. (Dibdin's "The London Theatre," Vol. I.) London, 1815.
Another. 8vo. (Oxberry's "New English Drama," Vol. I.) London, 1818.
Another. 12mo. (Oxberry's Edition.) London, 1820.
Another. 8vo. ("British Drama," Vol. I.) London, 1824.
Another. (In "Dramatic Works.") Greenock, 1829.
Another. 12mo. (In Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. II.) London, 1829.
Another. (In "Penny National Library," Vol. V.) London, 1830.
Another. (In Moore's "Collected Works.") London, 1833.
Another. (In Sinnett's "Family Drama.") Hamburg, 1834.
Another. (In Leigh Hunt's Edition of "Dramatic Works.") London, 1840
Another. (In Bohn's Edition of "Dramatic Works.") London, 1848.

(*So too in the successive editions of "Dramatic Works" and collected editions of Sheridan's Plays and Works.*)

Another. 12mo. Duncombe's Edition of Plays (Vol. XL.). London, 1850.
Another. 12mo. Lacy's "Acting Edition of Plays" (Vol. XXXIII.). 1858.
Another. 8vo. Truchy's Edition. Paris, 1861.
Another. 8vo. (In "Library of English Literature," Vol. I.) Gouda, 1885.
Another. 8vo. Illustrated by M. Gregory. London, 1890.
*Another. 8vo. (In "Plays," with an Introduction by E. Bergh and illustrations on Japanese vellum.) 2 vols. New York, 1901.
*8vo. The Rivals (and School for Scandal). Introduction by Augustine Birrell, illustrated by E. J. Sullivan. 8vo. London, 1896.
Another. 16mo. ("Temple Dramatists.") London, 1897.
*Another. 8vo. (In "Plays," with an Introduction by E. Bergh, illustrations on Japanese vellum.) 2 vols. New York, 1902.
*Another. 18mo. ("Ariel Booklets.") Putnam, 1902.
*Another. (Heinemann's "Favourite Classics," with "School for Scandal" and "The Critic," edited by E. Gosse.) London, 1905.
*Another. 8vo. (Introduction by Brander Matthews, illustrated.) Hurrap, 1907.

*Another. (With "The School for Scandal.") ("Pocket Library," illustrated.) Macmillan, 1908.

(E)

St. Patrick's Day; or, The Scheming Lieutenant: a Farce. (Produced at Covent Garden Theatre on May 2, 1775.)

[*Of this trifle no contemporary edition is ascertained. There are editions of it in Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. XXVIII., London* (1829), *and in Lacy's "Acting Edition of Plays," Vol. CXIV., London* (1879). *Also in the various late editions of Sheridan's complete works and dramatic works already enumerated.*]

(F)

The Duenna; or, The Double Elopement: a Comic Opera. (Produced at Covent Garden Theatre on November 21, 1775.)

*The Governess. Dublin, 1777. (Imposed on the public as "The Duenna," and acted for seventy-six nights.) [?] "As it is acted at the Theatre, Smoke Alley, Dublin." Dublin, 1786.

The Duenna (first authorised edition). 8vo. London, 1794.

Songs, etc., in "The Duenna." 8vo. London, 1775.[1]

Ditto. Eighth edition. Ditto. Ditto, 1776.

Ditto. Fifteenth edition. 4to. Ditto, 1776.

Ditto. Twenty-fifth. 8vo. Ditto, 1778.

Ditto. Twenty-ninth. 8vo. Ditto, 1783.

*The Duenna. 12mo. (In a book of "Plays.") Dublin, 1786.

*The Duenna. 12mo. Dublin, 1797.

The Duenna. Another edition. 12mo. Dublin, 1794.

Another. 8vo. London, 1794.

*Another. 8vo. (Together with "The Rivals," "School for Scandal," and "Critic," in the first collected edition of his works.) Millar. London, 1797.

Other editions in Mrs. Inchbald's "British Theatre," Vol. XIX., London (1808); Oxberry's "New English Drama," Vol. II. (1818); "London Stage," Vol. I. (1824); Duncombe's Edition, Vol. XXXIX. (1825); "British Drama," Vol. II. (1826); Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. II. (1829); "Penny National Library," Vol. V. (1830); "The London Theatre," pp. 78—95 (1834); "British Drama," Vol. IV. (1865); and see "Collected Works."

PARODIES ON "THE DUENNA."

(1) *8vo. La Gouvernante; or, The Duenna. A new Comic Opera, etc. London, 1779.

[1] Many of these songs figure separately in song-books of the time, and the germ of "What bard, O Time, discover," as mentioned in the text, appears in a set of verses written during Sheridan's honeymoon. Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 429.

(2) 8vo. The Duenna: a Comic Opera. London, 1775.

[Mr. Anderson's Bibliography gives this as if it were the play, but it is another political (anti-Northite) skit on it by Israel Pottinger. It was printed for E. Johnson and illustrated by a satirical vignette.]

*8vo. Linley's Music to "The Duenna." London [? 1773].

(G)

4to. The General Fast: a Lyric Ode, etc., by the Author of "The Duenna." London, 1775.

*Outside the British Museum copy no other imprint of this rare work has been forthcoming.*

(H)

A Trip to Scarborough. (Produced at Drury Lane Theatre, February 24, 1777.) "A Comedy . . . altered from Vanbrugh's Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger, etc." London, 1781. 8vo.

Another edition. 12mo. (Mrs. Inchbald's "Modern Theatre," Vol. VII.) London, 1811.

Another. 16mo. (Dibdin's "London Theatre," Vol. XIV.) London, 1815.

Another. 8vo. (Oxberry's "New English Drama," Vol. XX.) London, 1824.

Another. 8vo. ("London Stage," Vol. II.) London (1824).

Another. 12mo. (Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. IV.) London, 1829.

Another. 8vo. ("Penny National Library," Vol. V.) London (1830).

Another. 8vo. ("The Acting Library.") London (1834).

Another. 12mo. (Lacy's "Acting Edition of Plays.") London (1875).

[*And see both Bohn's and Chatto's Editions of "Collected Works."*]

(I)

The School for Scandal: a Comedy. (Produced at Drury Lane Theatre, May 8, 1777.)

8vo. Dublin, J. Ewing. [? 1778—9.]

[This is the first known edition, as appears from its being the only early one with an errata slip. Mr. Anderson gives the date as 1777, but in the text of the first volume of this work (p. 585) a newspaper authority for the date of Sheridan's sister's transfer of the MS. copy to Ryder, the Dublin Theatre manager, is given.]

12mo. Dublin, 1781.

[This has sometimes been sold at auction as the "first" edition.]

12mo. Fourth edition. Dublin, 1782.

*12mo. Ditto. Dublin, 1783.

16mo. (In a volume of "Plays," Theatre Royal, Dublin.) Dublin, 1785.

*Ditto. Ditto. Ditto, 1786.

[This volume contains two illustrations.]

12mo. "Fifth edition." London, 1788.

8vo. "As it is acted at the Theatre, Smoke Alley, Dublin" [no printer's name or place]. 1793.

*8vo. (together with "The Rivals," "Critic," and "Duenna," in the first collected edition of his plays). Millar. London, 1797.

*Die Schule der Verleumdung. (A German version by Schröder.) 1785.
*Les Deux Neveux (giving the Auction and Screen Scenes). Paris, 1788.
8vo. L'École du Scandale; ou, Les Mœurs du Jour. Par Monsieur Sheridan. Traduite en Français par Mr Bunel Delille, Avocat du Parlement de Paris. Galabin. London, 1789.
*L'Homme Sentimental (a Paraphrase). Paris, 1789.[1]
*12mo. (In English.) Printed for Theophilus Barrois, Rue Hautefeuille. Paris, 1789.
*12mo. (Edition not stated.) E. Powell. London, 1798.
*8vo. ("Taken from a correct copy.") Dublin, 1799.
12mo. (Captain F. Schneider's "Collection of English Plays," Vol. I.) Copenhagen, 1807 and 1812.
*8vo. (Edition not stated.) Murray. London, 1823.
*8vo. (Baudry's "Dramatic Works of Sheridan.") Paris, 1824.
8vo. ("The London Stage," Vol. IV.) London, 1824.
12mo. (Duncombe's Edition, Vol. I.) London, 1825.
8vo. ("British Drama," Vol. II.) London, 1826.
8vo. (Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. XIV.) London, 1829.
8vo. ("Penny National Library," Vol. V.) London, 1830.
8vo. ("The Acting Drama.") London, 1834.
8vo. (Sinnett's "Family Drama.") Hamburg, 1834.
8vo. (Webster's "Acting National Drama," Vol. VII.) London, 1837.
12mo. Ditto. Paris, 1852.
12mo. (Lacy's "Acting Edition of Plays," Vol. XXVII.) London, 1856.
Another. 8vo. Leipzig, 1861.
Another. 8vo. Göttingen, 1863.
Another. 8vo. ("British Drama," Vol. II.) London, 1864.
*8vo. School for Scandal (with "The Rivals"). [Introduction by Augustine Birrell; illustrated by E. J. Sullivan.] Macmillan. London, 1896.
*16mo. School for Scandal (Preface and notes by G. A. Aitken). ["Temple Dramatists."] Dent. 1897.
Another. *18mo. Putnam. 1902.
Another. *16mo. ("Ariel Series.") Ditto. Ditto.
Another (with "The Rivals"). 12mo. ["National Library."] Cassell. 1904.
18mo. School for Scandal, The Rivals, and The Critic. ["Favourite Classics."] (Edited by E. Gosse.) Heinemann. 1905.
12mo. School for Scandal (with "The Rivals"). ["Pocket Library"; illustrated.] Macmillan. 1908.
Another. *4to. With coloured illustrations by Lucius Rossi. No date.
[*And cf. above in "Collected Editions of Sheridan's Plays and Works."*]

[1] Shortly afterwards appeared "Le Tartuffe des Mœurs," acted at the Théâtre Français. Subsequent French versions were "Portraits de Famille," "Valsain et Florville,' and "Les Deux Cousins." In the eighteen-thirties two melodramatists collaborated in a fresh adaptation, "L'École du Scandale."

PARODIES ON "THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

(1) 12mo. The Real and Genuine School for Scandal. London, 1783.[1]
(2) *12mo. The School for Scandal, "Never before Printed," "for G. Lyster," etc. London. 1784.

(K)

"Verses to the Memory of Garrick, Spoken as a Monody" [by Mrs. Yates] "at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane."
4to. First edition (with a frontispiece engraved after Loutherbourg). London (T. Evans), 1779.
4to. Second edition [and many more editions in the same year]. London, 1779.
12mo. Another edition. "The Tears of Genius: a Monody on the Death of Mr. Garrick." Dublin, 1780.

(L)

The Critic; or, A Tragedy Rehearsed: a Dramatic Piece in Three Acts. (Produced at Drury Lane Theatre, October 30, 1779.)
First edition.[2] 8vo. (With an engraved title-page and a dedication to Mrs. Greville.) T. Becket. London, 1781.
Second edition. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.
Third edition. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.
Fourth edition. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.
*Fifth edition. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.
*Sixth edition. Ditto. Ditto. Ditto.
*Another. 8vo. (Together with "The Rivals," "School for Scandal," and "Duenna" in the first collected edition of his plays.) Millar. London, 1797.
*Another edition. Ditto. Ditto. (No date.)
Another edition. 12mo. Dublin, 1785.
Another. (Cawthorn's "Minor British Theatre," Vol. VI.) 1807.
*Another. 8vo. (Engraved title.) London, 1808.
*Another. 8vo. (Engraved title.) London, 1811.
Another. 8vo. ("Modern British Drama," Vol. V.) London, 1811.
Another. 16mo. (Dibdin's "The London Theatre," Vol. VIII.) London, 1814.
Another. 12mo. (Mrs. Inchbald's "Collection of Farces.") London, 1815.
Another. 8vo. (Oxberry's "New English Drama," Vol. IX.) London, 1820.
Another. 8vo. ("The London Stage," Vol. I.) London [1824].
Another. 8vo. ("British Drama," Vol. I.) London, 1824.
Another. 12mo. (Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. XV.) London [1829].

[1] In Mr. Anderson's list this looks as if it were an edition of the comedy.
[2] Without the half-title it is impossible to distinguish a first edition from a second of this play. Both have the same number of pages (98). Some of the later editions have more, but the sixth has also 98 pages.

Another. 8vo. ("Penny National Library," Vol. V.) London [1830].
Another. 8vo. ("The Acting Drama," pp. 27—38.) London, 1834.
Another. 12mo. (Lacy's "Acting Edition of Plays," Vol. VIII.) London [1850].
Another. 8vo. ("British Drama," Vol. III.) London, 1865.
*Another. 16mo. [Dent's "Temple Dramatists."] (Preface and Notes by G. A. Aitken.) London, 1897.
*Another. 18mo. (With "The School for Scandal" and "The Rivals.") [Heinemann's "Favourite Classics," edited by E. Gosse.] London, 1905.

[*And cf. the Editions of Sheridan's Collected Plays and Works at the beginning of this Bibliography.*]

(M)

"I have a silent sorrow here." 1798. [Song introduced into Thompson's adaptation of Kotzebue's "Stranger," and separately published with music by the Duchess of Devonshire, cf. *ante*, p. 277]. Also various emendations of "The Stranger."

(N)

Pizarro, a Tragedy in Five Acts, taken from the German Drama of Kotzebue, and adapted to the English Stage by R. B. Sheridan. [With Dedication to his second wife.] (Produced at Drury Lane Theatre, May 24, 1799.)
8vo. Ridgway. London, 1799.
*12mo. "Genuine edition." Dublin, 1799.
*8vo. "Third edition." London, 1799.
*8vo. Edition printed on "fine paper." London, 1799.
*12mo. "Genuine edition." "As performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. Taken from the German Drama, etc." Printed for H. & P. Rice, No. 16, South Second-Street, Philadelphia, 1799.
8vo. Twentieth edition. London, 1799.
8vo. Twenty-fourth edition. London, 1800.
8vo. Twenty-sixth edition. London, 1800.
8vo. Thirtieth edition. London, 1814.
Another edition. 8vo. ("London Stage," Vol. I.) London, 1824.

[This play is also to be found in Oxberry's "New English Drama" (1824); "British Drama," Vol. II. (1826); Cumberland's "British Theatre," Vol. I. (1829); "Penny National Library," Vol. V. (1830); "The Acting Drama," pp. 95—111 (1834); Lacy's "Acting Edition of Plays," Vol. XXVII. [1856]; and among the Collected Plays in Moore's, Bohn's and Chatto's Editions.]

Another edition. 8vo. (With Historical Notes by Charles Keen.) London (1856).
Another. 8vo. ("British Drama," Vol. I.) London 1864.

PARODIES ON "PIZARRO."

(1) *8vo. Sheridan and Kotzebue. The Adventures of Pizarro, with "Criticisms on the Play." Fairburn. London, 1799.

(2) 8vo. A Critique on the "Tragedy of Pizarro as represented at Drury Lane Theatre with such uncommon applause, to which is added a new Prologue," etc. London, 1799.

[*Sheridan shared in the adaptation of "The Stranger," by B. Thompson, from Kotzebue* (1798) [*see above*]. *He also assisted several Drury Lane productions, including Tickell's "The Camp"* (1778), *his "Carnival of Venice"* (1780), *and Burgoyne's "The Heiress"* (1780). *Further, he contributed to an English adaptation of Sedaine's "Richard Cœur de Lion"* (1786), *and he helped in the arrangement of several pantomimes: "Harlequin Hurly Burly"* (1786); *"Robinson Crusoe"* (1781); *Pilon's "Thelypthoros"* (1781); *apparently in Cobb's "The Doctor and Apothecary"* (1788), *and in "The Forty Thieves," which was published under his name and G. Colman's the younger, his collaborator, in Duncombe's Edition, Vol. II., 4to, London* (1825). *Among published compositions misattributed to him are "Crazy Tales"* (*really by J. H. Stevenson*) *in verse* (*London, 12mo,* 1825).]

(O) *Prologues, Epilogues, etc. And cf. post, p.* 458.

(1) *Prologues* to "A Trip to Scarborough" (1777), to Savage's "Sir Thomas Overbury" (1777), and to Lady Craven's "Miniature Picture" (1781).

(2) *Epilogues* to *Dryden's "Tempest" (revived in 1777), to Hannah More's "Fatal Falsehood" (1779), and to Captain Ayscough's adaptation of Voltaire's "Semiramis."

(3) *In his own plays:*

*Prologues* (two) to "The Rivals"; to "A Trip to Scarborough," and to "Pizarro."

*Epilogue* to "The Rivals."

(4) *"A Portrait": Dedicatory Verses to Mrs. Crewe presented with a manuscript copy of "The School for Scandal," and published in the more modern editions of his plays.

(P) *Speeches and Political Pamphlets.*

8vo. Speeches of the late Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, several corrected by himself. Edited by a Constitutional Friend. 5 vols. London, 1816.

*8vo. Ditto in 3 vols. Bohn. London, 1842.

[*This is the more convenient edition.*]

8vo. Speeches. ("Modern Orator," Vol. I.) London, 1845.

8vo. The Legislative Independence of Ireland vindicated in a Speech of Mr. Sheridan's on the Irish Propositions in the British House of Commons, price a British sixpence. Dublin, 1785.

8vo. The Speech of R. B. Sheridan in bringing forward the fourth charge (in the House of Commons) relative to the Begums of Oude. London, 1787.

*8vo. The Genuine Speech of Mr. Sheridan delivered in the House of Commons on a charge etc. against Warren Hastings Esquire, late Governor-General of Bengal, for Extortion, Perfidy & Cruelty to the Princesses and other Branches of the Royal Family of Oude: Faithfully reported [apparently from shorthand reports]. W. Richardson. London (1787).

8vo. Speech before the High Court of Parliament on summing up the Evidence on the Begum Charge against Warren Hastings, Esqre. London, 1788.

*8vo. A Short Memoir of the Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan, etc., to which is added A Report of his Celebrated Speech delivered, etc., in Westminster Hall. Booth. London, 1816.

8vo. Speeches in the Trial of Warren Hastings. Edited by E. A. Bond [from Gurney's original shorthand notes]. Vols. I. and IV. London, 1859—1861.

4to. A Comparative Statement of the Two Bills for the better Government of India brought into Parliament by Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, with explanatory Observations. London, 1788.

(*Three editions are known of this year.*)

8vo. Speech in the House of Commons on the 21st of April, 1798, on the motion to address His Majesty on the present alarming state of affairs. London, 1798.

8vo. Speech of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esquire, in the House of Commons in reply (December 8, 1802) on the motion for the Army Establishment for the ensuing year. London, 1802.

8vo. Ditto, "New edition." 1803.

8vo. Ditto, The Speech of R. B. Sheridan in the House of Commons, December 8, 1802, on the Army Estimates, etc. Birmingham (1802).

### (2) Unpublished Works.

(*Those hitherto unknown or unnoticed are marked with an asterisk.*)

*Prose.*

1769—1770. Sketch for a play founded on "The Vicar of Wakefield."

*A skit for the use of Angelo in the character of a conjuror at a Pantheon masquerade.

Essay on Prosody (in the form of a critique on Dr. Foster's "Genius of Pope"). [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 265.]

*Essay on Patriotism. [Cf. *ante*, *ibid.*, p. 266.]

Letter to the Duke of Grafton.

Letter to "Novus" [in defence of Lord North].

1770—1771. Hernan's Journal [the first number, *several drafts for which remain among the Sheridan MSS.]. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 303.]

Ixion, a Musical Burlesque, in collaboration with Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. [The original form of this extravaganza in prose and verse was entitled "Jupiter," cf. Sheridan MSS. and Eg. MS. 25935.]

[?] *Dissertation on Ancient and Modern Pastoral Poetry [mentioned in Halhed's letters of this date].

*An "Epistle from a Cauliflower to Christopher Anstey, Esquire," together with "An Apology to Mr. Artichoke" (Sheridan MSS.). [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., pp. 280, 281.]

1772. *Notes on Mathematics, Geography, History, Latin, Horticulture, etc.

*An Abstract of the History of England (*lost*). [Mentioned in Sheridan's Letters to Thomas Grenville.]

Criticisms on the Works of Sir William Temple (*lost*, but partially given by Moore).

*Remarks on Blackstone (Sheridan MSS.).

*A recital of the circumstances attending Sheridan's attachment to Miss Linley (*lost*). [Mentioned in Sheridan's Correspondence with Grenville.]

1774. *Critique on a "Flying Piece of a Political Writer about the Present Ministry" [*i.e.*, Lord North's] (Sheridan MSS., published in *Woodfall's Advertiser*). [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 467.]

The Sanctuary [an essay on the Education of Women, addressed to Queen Charlotte] (Sheridan MSS.). [*Unpublished portions are given in this work.]

Comments on Lord Chesterfield's Letters. [*Unpublished portions are given in this work.]

1775. A Projected Reply to Dr. Johnson's "Taxation, no Tyranny." [*Unpublished portions are given in this work, cf. Vol. I., p. 474.]

[1777 (or perhaps earlier). A Tract on Irish Absentees, and the Rough Draft for a portion of it. For analysis and *new matter cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 598.]

1777. *A Memorandum on Naval Affairs (Sheridan MSS.).

1779. Five contributions to *The Englishman*. [*For the first time analysed, explained and supplemented in this work, cf. *ante*, Vol. I., pp. 589—598.]

*A mock "Proclamation," "assisted by Gibbon." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 597.]

1784. [?] *"The House that George built." [A political skit repeated next year in "The Rolliad."]

1786. *A Romantic Fragment on a Wreck. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 94.]

1787. *Appraisement of a Gig bought by the Hon. J. Townshend of the Right Hon. R. Fitzpatrick. [Sheridan MSS., and cf. *ante*, p. 92.]

[? 1788] "The Journal of the Right Honourable Henry Dundas." [First printed in "The Album of Streatham; or, Ministerial Amusements," but afterwards included in later editions of "The Rolliad."]

1788. *A Letter to Thurlow on the Regency question.

1789. *The Letter to Mr. Pitt [on the Regency question]. [Cf. Appendix, p. 393.] A note for this exists in the Sheridan MSS.

*Memorial for the Prince to the King about the Queen.

*Letter for the Prince to the King. [Cf. *ante*, p. 196.]

1791. *Fragments of a Rejoinder to Burke's "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." [Cf. *ante*, p. 212.]

*A *jeu d'esprit* on "The Venerable Madam Drury." [Cf. *ante*, p. 279.]

1799. *Draft for an unpublished song in "Pizarro." [Cf. *ante*, p. 273.]

1800. *Some Political Nonsense-verses. [Cf. *ante*, p. 305.]

1802. A Memorandum on the State of Parties. [Cf. *ante*, p. 299.]

A Letter to the Prince about Grey. [Cf. *ante*, p. 353.]

1802—1803. *A Letter for the Prince to the King. [Cf. *ante*, p. 301.]

1803. *A number of Epigrams about the election of Joseph Haydn as a member of the French Academy.

1805. *An Epitaph on Nelson.

*A Letter for the Prince to the King on the Catholic question. [Cf. *ante*, p. 324.]

1811. *The reply for the Prince to the Representation of both Houses of Parliament on the Regency Restrictions.

*A Letter to the Prince on the Regency question. [Cf. *ante*, p. 338.]

*A Letter to the Prince about Grey. [Cf. *ante*, p. 353.]

1812. *A Letter for the Prince to Mr. Perceval. [Cf. *ante*, p. 341.]

*Part of the Prince's Letter to the Duke of York. [Cf. *ante*, p. 349.]

*Verse and Drama.*

1770—1771. *Sundry "Anacreontics," including "I ne'er could any lustre see" (afterwards introduced into "The Duenna"), "The Kiss," and "I gave my love a budding rose." [See "Published Works," (C), (3) and (4), and cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 277.]

*"Epigrams." [These are only known by a passing mention in Halhed's Letters.]

*A fragment concerning Poets. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 305.]

*Fragment of a Satire on Poetasters, addressed to "Philo," by whom is meant Miles Peter Andrews. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 313.]

*Three "Pastorals." [Sheridan MSS., and cf. *ante*, Vol. I., 295, 296.]

1770. "Cherub of Heaven." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 193.]

1771. Crazy Tales (in rhyme (?)). [Mentioned in Halhed's Letters, and *not* the "Crazy Tales" by John Hall Stevenson, reissued and mis-ascribed to Sheridan in 1816.] Stevenson was Sterne's eccentric friend.

1772. "Dry be that tear." [The earliest MS. draft for this lyric is to be found in Add. MS. 29764, f. 57. There are copies in the Sheridan MSS., and a version was published before 1806, in "The Festival of Love." It was repeated in another collection of love-poems in 1827. Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 273.]

*"Shall my Eliza to the buds and trees." [Addressed to Miss Linley. Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 370.]

"Uncouth is this moss-covered grotto of stone." ["The Grotto," cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 371.]

Several songs afterwards included in "The Duenna."

"Think not, my love, when secret grief." [Published during 1798 in the play of "The Stranger," with music by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.]

[? 1772] *Verses on "Poor Lucy." [Cf. *ante*, App. to Vol. I.]

[?] *"Heroick Epistle and Postscript." [Mentioned in a letter to him from Linley evidently of this date.]

1773. *"On Eliza's ceasing to sing." [Cf. App. to Vol. I.]

Two songs afterwards introduced into "The Duenna," one of them—"Teach me, kind Hymen"—being the nucleus of "What bard, O Time, discover."

*"We too each other's only pride." [Introduced into "The Foresters," cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 541.]

[? 1774] *Scene from a bacchanalian fragment. [Cf. Add. MS. 26036, and 29764, f. 71; and cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 480.]

1775. Fragment of "A Wild Drama" [or, "A Drama of Devils"; unpublished portions are given in this work; cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 478].

Verses on a Woman's appreciation of Poetasters. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 544.]

[?1775] Fragment of Verses on "Windsor Castle." [Cited Moore, Vol. I., p. 338.]

1777. *Three Scenes of "The Statesman," a Comedy. [Cf. Sheridan MSS. Eg. MS. 25939, and *ante*, Vol. I., p. 537.]

"The Foresters," a Romantic Drama. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 539.]

*"Near Avon's ridgy bank there grows." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., pp. 370, 520.]

A Rhymed Letter from one London Woman of Fashion to another. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 547.]

[? 1777] Verses on the Death of an Avadavat. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. II., p. 98.]

1778. Some touches to Tickell's "The Camp."

[? 1779] "Of that same tree which gave the box." [Fragment on Death, cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 278, *n.* 2.]

1780. Satirical Epitaph on Brooks's. [See *ante*, Vol. I., p. 545.]

1780—1781. Notes for a Comedy to be entitled "Affectation." [Sheridan MSS., and cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 611.]

[178?] "King Arthur, a Fairy Opera." [Eg. MS. 25937, and *ante*, Vol. I., p. 481.]

[178?] *"The Governor" [?] "A Musical Afterpiece." [Eg. MS. 25937; a song from this—"Melancholy, friend to Grief"—also remains among the Sheridan MSS., cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 7.]

[178?] *Scenes of an Italian Tragedy. [Sheridan MSS.]

[178?] *"Renaud d'Asti," an Historical Tragedy. [Eg. MS. 25937.]

[178?] *A Dramatic Proverb [*lost*]. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 480, *n.* 2, and Add. MSS. 29764, f. 72.]

[178?] *"An Unfinished Sketch" of a Play founded on Suckling's "The Goblins." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 482.]

1781. *Three Songs (cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 443) for Tickell's "Carnival of Venice."

1781. *Some touches to the Pantomime of "Robinson Crusoe."

[? 1783] "If fortune to thee treasures gave." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 427.]

1784. Some Political Squibs for the Westminster Election. [Cf. *ante*, p. 62.]

[? 1786] Fragment of an Epilogue beginning "The Campus Martius of St. James's Street." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 546.]

*Fragment of an Epilogue concerning Female Gamesters. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 545.]

[?] *Some Political Epigrams in "The Rolliad."

1785. *Some touches to the Pantomime of "Harlequin Hurly Burly."

1786. *Some touches to Burgoyne's play of "The Heiress."

[? 1786] Elegy on his wife's Avadavat. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 481.]

*Verses on a jaunt to Richmond with the Bouveries and the Crewes. [Sheridan MSS.]

*Some touches to the play of "Richard Cœur de Lion."

1789. Satirical Epitaph on Mr. Speaker Cornwall and his brother-in-law, Lord Grantley. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 83.]

1792. *Fragment of Verses addressed to the Duchess of Devonshire. [In the author's possession.]

*A Pastoral. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 539, and *ante*, App. IV. (b).]

"No more shall the Spring." [A lament on Mrs. Sheridan's death.] [Cf. *ante*, p. 228.]

1794. *"The Glorious First of June." [An Operetta in honour of the victory. The dialogue was written by Sheridan and Cobb. The performance was given for the widows and orphans of the combatants, and £1,300 were netted. Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 610.]

1795. *Verses "To Laura" [included in "Clio's Protest" (1819)]. [Cf. *ante*, p. 446. These verses are an elegy on a kinsman of the second Mrs. Sheridan, killed in action.]

1797. *"To Three fair Ladies in England." [Verses addressed to George Ellis at Lille. Cf. *ante*, p. 93.]

[? 1799] *A Fragment of a set of verses addressed to the Duchess of Devonshire at Bath. [Sheridan MSS.]

[?1800] "The Waltz: an Apostrophic Hymn." [Cf. *ante*, p. 266, *n.* 3.]

[? 1800—1806] Various Album Verses addressed to Lady Ann Hamilton and Others. [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 317; and the Verses on "My Trunk," "Lady Jane," and "Mr. Bigg," cited by Moore, Vol. II., pp. 477, 478.]

Verses addressed to Lord Howe, "Never mind them, brave, black Dick." [Cf. Moore, Vol. II., p. 479.]

1811. "In all humility we crave." [A lampoon on Grey and Grenville in the Regency imbroglio. Cf. *ante*, p. 336.]

[? 1814] *"Alas! how quickly joy is past." [Cf. *ante*, Vol. I., p. 8.]

# APPENDIX VI

## A NOTE ON SOME SHERIDAN PORTRAITS

# VI

## A NOTE ON SOME SHERIDAN PORTRAITS

SHERIDAN'S likeness was taken by most of the celebrated artists of his day, though it need not be pointed out that others paid them. Reynolds's well-known portrait (which, however, only stereotypes one of Sheridan's aspects) was painted in 1789. Of this there are several replicas and variants, one in the Garrick Club, another (the one engraved in this work) at Frampton Court, and others again in engravings for contemporary and succeeding books. A drawing, attributed with high probability to the same master, is reproduced in Mr. Rae's biography, and an oil-painting (in the possession of Mr. Horace Pym, of Brastead) which presents yet a fresh aspect of Sheridan as a young man. It gives an unusual impression of ease and cheerfulness, quite free from that dash of pugnacity and hint of suspicion that marks some others; and Reynolds limned Mrs. Sheridan more than once, as has been noticed. An oil study for the head of her as St. Cecilia is now in the possession of her descendant's husband, Colonel Hall Walker.

Romney painted Sheridan on several occasions. The fine portrait engraved in this work appears for the first time, and with regard to its resemblance it should be remarked that the features entirely tally with a miniature by Cosway in Miss Beare's collection. Another genuine Romney portrait was sold at Christie's in April, 1895, and still another in 1903, while one was disposed of at Robinson and Fisher's so recently as 1908. The "Muskett" portrait (mentioned in Fulcher's Life of Gainsborough, p. 213, as in possession of J. S. Muskett, Esq.) seems really to be a Romney. At Mr. Muskett's death it passed to his son-in-law, Colonel Unthank, of Intwood Hall; an expert described it to the late Lord Dufferin as a beautiful picture and an undoubted likeness. It was previously exhibited in one of the Royal Academy Winter Exhibitions as a Romney.

Gainsborough, too, often depicted him. There is the Peel portrait, which emphasises Sheridan's smartness as he stands habited in the garb of the Prince's club, wearing buttons impressed with the royal feathers. A full-length portrait of Sheridan by Gainsborough also was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783, and became the property of the Equitable Assurance Society. Gainsborough too painted a picture of Sheridan with his wife and child, which eleven years since belonged to Mr. Jardine, of Liverpool; and the portrait of their son Tom, which remains in possession of the family, and was exhibited in 1815 during Sheridan's lifetime at the British Institute. Another, attributed to Gainsborough, was in New York in 1896.

Gainsborough, naturally enough, often painted Mrs. Sheridan and the Linley family. The Knole picture of Mrs. Sheridan and her brother Thomas was early in the possession of the Dorset family, while a pastel replica of it still hangs at Frampton Court. The portrait, now belonging

to Lord Rothschild, of Mrs. Sheridan seated on a bank came from Delapré Abbey, while another of her, which belonged to the late Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, was, if I mistake not, once the property of the Sheridan family. There is another of her (full length) seated under a tree, which once belonged to the Viscountess Clifden, and still another, which in 1898 was owned by Major Shuttleworth. One of the most beautiful is the familiar picture of Miss Linley and her sister Mary (Tickell) now in the Dulwich Gallery.

Hoppner, too, painted Sheridan several times and his second wife at least twice. There is some difficulty in identifying one of his portraits of her husband. The fine example exhibited in 1907 at the Burlington House Winter Exhibition (and previously reproduced in "The Creevey Papers") seems, apart from pedigree, not indisputable as a portrait of Sheridan, though it is quite likely that it may be authentic. The writer has an old engraving, evidently a version of this portrait, but he has seen another illustrating an old theatrical magazine with the words "M. Fawcett" (the actor) underneath. This, however, does not amount to proof positive, since these magazines constantly took the portraits of others for their purpose. A good Hoppner portrait was sold at Christie's during 1909.

The crayon by Russell, now in the National Portrait Gallery, does not carry complete conviction to the author's mind. There was a great resemblance between Sheridan and his friend, Joseph Richardson. The portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, which appears in this work and is the property of the husband of Sheridan's great-great-granddaughter, Lady Stracey, cannot fail to impress the reader, and it would be interesting to learn what other presentments Sir Thomas made of Sheridan and his belongings. He certainly drew the Linleys. His painting of William Linley as a boy is familiar, while a crayon of another Linley belongs to the Dulwich Gallery, though it is not publicly exhibited. Cosway made miniatures alike of Sheridan, his wife, and her sister, Mrs. Tickell. Robert Edge Pine may also have portrayed Sheridan, for a second portrait at the Garrick Club, presented by Sir Squire Bancroft, seems somewhat in his manner; and of course Beach and other pupils of Reynolds are likely to have tried their hand. Painters of the Drury Lane actors might be expected to limn him; Zoffany certainly painted Mrs. Sheridan. Ozias Humphry, also intimately connected with Sheridan and the Linleys in their youth, must surely have taken his portrait, as he certainly did his first wife's. The author owns a likeness of the young Sheridan in chalks and water-colour (now reproduced in this work) which some have attributed to Gainsborough, others to Rowlandson or Russell, but it seems more probable that this is the work of Ozias Humphry. This picture was given by Sheridan to an old servant.

The portraits that illustrate contemporary magazines and books are very numerous, and some of them are equally dubious. An early one in a *Westminster Magazine* of 1782 is hardly recognisable; it may be compared to a coarse and disfigured on of his wife which appeared earlier. Later

ones by Corbould, Lochee, and others to adorn other compilations, literary or theatrical, are merely conventional. A better and rarer example by the Irish artist, Hickey, is reproduced in this work. A hideous engraving, after a miniature of him shortly before he died, exists ; also one by Clint, after a good sketch of him about the same period; memorial verses accompany it. There are many doubtful portraits of Sheridan which need not be discussed, and he figures in several groups, such as the Wheatley water-colour referred to in these pages, and in the big picture of the House of Commons, which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

The caricatures are legion; they are all by political opponents, and with few exceptions, represent him as a blotched and bloated Silenus.

## ERRATA.

### Vol. II.

Page 2, note 2, *for* "Mr." *read* "Mrs."

Page 5, note 1, *for* "of" *read* "from."

Page 37, line 13, *for* "Behind" *read* "Behold."

Page 97. The note-reference should be transferred to the word "Love," line 10, p. 98.

Page 202, line 23 } *for* "Payne" *read* "Paine." [Tom Paine, of "The
Page 208, note 3 } Rights of Man."]

Page 305, note 1, *add* apostrophes to "Ardens" and "Roses."

Page 320, note 1, *for* "Elliot" read "Eliot."

Page 379, line 12, *for* "Next morning" *read* "Without delay."

Page 381, line 24, *for* "Earl" *read* "Earle."

Page 420, notes 2 and 3 should be reversed.

Page 434, line 26, insert comma after "Lady John."

Page 434, note 1, *for* "Leighs" *read* Leys."

Page 454, line 5 (and wherever else the pantomime is mentioned), the date of the first performance of "Harlequin Hurly Burly" *should be* 1783, *not* 1786. The boy Grimaldi made his first appearance at Drury Lane Theatre in it. He gratefully recognised Sheridan's kindness.

*** *For* "Anne," Dowager Lady Townshend, "Audrey" *should be read*. And in Volume I., p. 79, *for* "grandmother," *read* "the mother."

## CORRIGENDA AND ADDENDA TO INDEX.

Page 471, under "Archer," delete "the."

Page 474, under "Bright," *for* "Kotzebue" *read* "Sheridan."

Page 476, under "Burke," delete the last two lines but one.

Page 477, under "George Canning," delete reference to "Esto Perpetua," and substitute "allusions to Sheridan's early interest in Canning, i. 55, ii. 386."

Page 478, under "Stratford Canning (George Canning's uncle)," insert "in reference to R.B.S.'s letters to, ii. 82"; and insert at end "and Sheridan's truancy, ii. 93."

Page 487, under "E.," delete the first heading and add to the second "On R.B.S.'s dying hours, ii. 382."

Page 489, *for* "Falkland" *read* "Faulkland."

Page 490, *for* "Faulkland" *read* "Falkland."

Page 490, 1st col., last heading. The Indexer has mistaken the forenames; the "P" only should be retained.

Page 490, under "Fitzpatrick," add "Probable Author of *Pindar's Answer* to *Clio's Protest*, i. 307." Delete from "*Secret Service*" up to "death." After "at Woburn" insert "(1803)."

Page 491, under "Ford, Captain," *for* "Richardson" *read* "Richard."

Page 509, *for* "play" *read* "character in *She Stoops to Conquer*, by."

Page 512, under heading "Norfolk Street," *for* "R.B.S." *read* "The Linleys."

Page 520, before "*Roman Father*" heading insert "*Romantic Fragment*, by R.B.S., i. 95."

Page 528, line 24, before "sarcasm" insert "romantic instinct, i. 95"; under "dwellings," delete "Norfolk Street."

Page 529, under "Letters," add at end, "To his son Tom in indignation at the Whig leaders, i. 70, ii. 348."

Page 532, line 6, after "*et seq.*," insert "letters on the Grey-Grenville episode, i. 70, ii. 348;"

Page 533, under sub-heading "unpublished," before "117" insert "95,"

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*The initials R.B.S. in this Index represent Richard Brinsley Sheridan.*


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